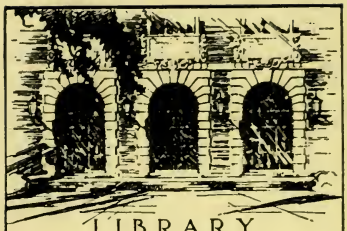

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WOMAN'S TEMPTATION.

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

THE HON. MRS RALPH DUTTON.

Such is my name, and such my tale,
Confessor—To thy secret ear
I breathe the sorrows I bewail,
And thank thee for the generous tear.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
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1860.

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CONSEQUENCES.

Shall I fail?
The Greeks said grandly, in their tragic phrase,
"Let no one be called happy till his death,"
To which I add—Let no one till his death
Be called unhappy. Measure not the work
Until the day's out, and the labour done;
Then bring your gauges. If the day's work's scant,
Why call it scant? affect no compromise;
And in that we have nobly striven, at least
Deal with us nobly, women though we be,
And honour us with truth, if not with praise.

E. Barrett Browning.

Gen rec Aug 24 Apr '52 Chislett = 3v.

PREFACE.

The following pages were scarcely in the hands of the Publishers, when the writer of them was taken from among us by a death most sudden and unexpected.

This is not the place to dwell upon our loss, though what that loss is, none can appreciate but those few who were intimately acquainted with her pure spirit and bright intelligence; and they indeed feel that her place among us can never be filled up.

Had her life been prolonged, we cannot doubt but that the present work would have been but the earnest of others; but the active brain and

the ready hand are now still beneath the snow-covered grave; she is cut off, even before she had put the finishing stroke to her first work;—and as the writer's life had been one of almost constant retirement and self-culture, we hope that these pages will be found to be as interesting as they are well-intentioned, and that the remarkable knowledge and insight into character shown throughout, may be looked upon as indications of mental powers of no common order.

F. D.

Feb. 14, 1860.

WOMAN'S TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER I.

Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight.
SURREY.

* * * * *

Enjoy thy youth, it will not stay;
Enjoy the fragrance of thy prime,
For oh! it is not always May!

Enjoy the spring of love and youth,
To some good angel leave the rest;
For time will teach thee soon the truth,
There are no birds in last year's nest.
LONGFELLOW.

"GERALDINE, why are you wasting your time in this way? Take that new duet, and

practise it. Remember Signor A. comes to-morrow."

So spoke Lady Bournemouth, as she entered her daughter's school-room. Lady Geraldine raised her eyes languidly.

"Oh, mamma, I have such a headache. I shall have plenty of time before he comes."

"Nonsense! you know Mrs H. comes in the morning. If your head aches, why don't you take some sal volatile?" replied her mother, leaving the room.

Lady Geraldine pressed her hand to her forehead, pushed her hair behind her ears, seated herself at the piano, and began practising.

Geraldine Vivian was the only daughter of the Earl and Countess of Bournemouth. Her mother, a complete woman of the world, was as fond of her as she could be of anything, and constantly repeated to herself that her dearest object was Geraldine's well-being; meaning thereby that her daughter should be turned out from the school-room a beautiful and accomplished girl, and, after blazing for a short time in London society, a star of

the first magnitude, should find a rich and noble husband.

For this desirable end, Lady Bournemouth toiled and planned day and night. Already at the top of the ladder, as regarded fashion and position, there was nothing further to be accomplished on that score, and therefore it was to Geraldine herself that her cares were chiefly directed. One of a large and needy, though well-born family, her own education had been very slight, and like most uneducated people, she was nervously anxious that her child should never know the neglect which she herself had felt to be so serious a disadvantage. Therefore, governesses, masters, books, all the means and appliances of a first-rate education, as it is called, were lavished on her daughter. If ever a girl ought to have been a walking epitome of all the arts and sciences, that girl was Geraldine Vivian. No hour, no moment of the day was left unoccupied. Masters and mistresses followed one another with a rapidity which might have wearied the most eager scholar; and any spare moment which might chance to be

unemployed was filled up with history, geography, chronology, arithmetic, all the thousand and one half-taught *et ceteras* of an English girl's education. It was perhaps fortunate that the object of all this care showed none of that zeal in the pursuit of knowledge that her mother did in supplying the means of acquiring it. Nothing would have induced Geraldine to practise one minute later, or draw one stroke more, than the set time and quantity.

As to the Sciences, they fared worse than the Arts, and "Useful Knowledge" was more entirely at a discount than either. Her governess was driven to despair by her unconquerable idleness; and her masters were divided between vexation at her childish frivolity, and admiration of the real talent she displayed when the humour took her. Her memory was excellent, and her aptitude for learning great; had she so pleased, she might easily have excelled in anything she undertook. Her eye for drawing was correct; but while she scarcely paid any attention to her master's instructions, she spent the time that should have been otherwise employed in drawing caricatures

which would have made "Punch's" artists burn their tools and their sketches in disgust. Her ear for music was keen, her touch good, and her voice of remarkable compass and sweetness; but neither vocally nor instrumentally did she accomplish the results to be expected from such unusual powers. It was the same with everything else; except the dancing mistress, no one had reason to be satisfied with Geraldine's progress. There, indeed, she surpassed even her mother's expectations; such wonderful and enchanting grace and joyousness dwelt in her every movement and gesture. And with this, and with the disheartening consciousness that her daughter might do much better if she chose, Lady Bournemouth was fain to be satisfied. Well for Geraldine that her mother did not take a peep into the school-room at some moment when Miss Wood was absent, and when the young lady might pretty often have been found romping over the chairs and sofas with her little King Charles, rattling off polkas and waltzes instead of scales, singing the popular airs of

the day in the place of exercises; and, generally speaking, making wild work with her grammars, dictionaries, and histories. It was with some truth that Miss Wood protested that her pupil was so childish, it was impossible to trust her for a moment by herself; no sooner was the governess's back turned than Geraldine was at her pranks, and when she returned, many a mark did the school-room bear of what had gone on in her absence. Too good-natured to complain to Lady Bournemouth, Miss Wood mildly remonstrated and reproved, and invariably received for answer, "I am so dull; I must keep myself alive. When I have more amusement I shall behave better." It was unanswerable—the first part at least; and so Geraldine's vagaries were suffered to pass without much comment.

But notwithstanding her fearless nature and apparent lawlessness, she stood in great awe of her mother, the dread of whose displeasure was enough to induce her to curb her wild spirits at any time. And, therefore, under the

influence of that fear, she now sat down to practise what she had pronounced a hundred times to be "a stupid, nasty, tiresome, disagreeable piece."

As she sits there, you would scarcely imagine her to be the romping, childish girl I have described her. But she suffered the usual penalty of high spirits in pretty frequent fits of depression, and as she had been in a wild state of laughter and excitement all the morning, it was not wonderful that she had the "blues" all the afternoon.

Her eyes and ears are fixed on the music, and her attention is so wrapped up in it that she does not hear a carriage drive up to the door. But she starts and raises her eyes, as a handsome and distinguished-looking young man enters the room.

"Lindon!"

"Well, Cherry, and how are you? Didn't my mother say I was coming? I wrote to tell her."

"Not a word—I had no idea of it."

"Where is she? and where is Arthur?"

"Out—all out, except me."

"And what have you been about since I saw you last?"

"Lessons! lessons! lessons! nothing but lessons."

"Heyday! what's the matter now?"

"'Tis so dull! I never go out anywhere, or see anybody! Nothing but singing and drawing, and practising all day long! I hate it all, and I *hate* practising!" said Geraldine, clashing down her hands on the piano with considerable violence.

"Take care, you'll hurt yourself, and spoil the piano," observed her brother, quietly.

"If I could spoil the nasty thing! oh dear! oh dear! it's so tiresome!"

"Well, you seem to amuse yourself, too," said Lord Lindon, taking up a sheet of drawing-paper. One side was covered with caricatures, and on the other was a chalk head.

"I thought I had burnt that!" exclaimed Lady Geraldine in alarm. "Please give it to me, Lindon. Mamma would be so angry if she saw it!"

"I thought you showed me a head like this

when I was here last," said her brother, turning the paper round.

"So I did; I made another after I had spoilt that one."

"But that seems to be giving yourself unnecessary trouble."

"It's all the same to me. If I had finished that, I should have been sent to my music, so it comes to the same thing in the end. I don't care! I wish I were Gertrude Ellison! she always goes out twice a day. And that's another vexation. She promised to call on me to-day, and when mamma heard of it she said I shouldn't see Gertrude, because I had my music to practise," said Geraldine, bursting into tears.

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Lord Lindon. "Don't cry, Cherry; I'll tell the servants to let her in. Or stay, I hear my mother on the stairs. I'll make it all right with her."

Geraldine dried her eyes, and began practising assiduously. Presently her brother came back.

"It's all right; and you may drive with Gertrude, if she can take you."

"Oh, thank you, Lindon; thank you!"

And Geraldine sprung up, closed the piano with a bang, and danced round the room.

"I should think you will enjoy yourself when you come out, at all events, as you are so fond of dancing," said her brother. "But see, here comes Gertrude, just in time."

As Lord Lindon left the room, Miss Ellison entered it.

"Dear Gertrude, I am so glad to see you!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"I met Lindon on the stairs; why did you not tell me he was coming home?"

"I did not know it myself till he walked in, half an hour ago. Mamma never tells me anything. Now don't look shocked; it's the truth. I wish she were like Aunt Ellison!"

Gertrude, seeing the conversation take this turn, endeavoured to change it.

"Have you been out, Geraldine?"

"No," replied her cousin, breaking out again, "I never go out as you do. However, Lindon has got me leave to go out with you this afternoon, if you can take me. Is there a place in the carriage?"

"Certainly there is, and I am glad you are

coming, for mamma and I are going to drive to Dulwich and see the pictures. You will like that?"

"Of all things! Let us go to Eaton Square at once, for I long to be out of this house."

Gertrude, as we have seen, was Geraldine's first cousin; Sir William Ellison being Lady Bournemouth's brother. At a time when he had found it necessary to go to the West Indies, personally to superintend his property there, Lady Ellison, who accompanied him, had left her little nine-year-old daughter under Lady Bournemouth's care. So for three years Gertrude and Geraldine lived together like sisters, sharing one another's amusements and, alas for Gertrude! one another's lessons also. She was a gentle, nervous, sensitive child, without any of the fearlessness and elasticity of temperament which carried Geraldine pretty well through her difficulties. The large, dark, shy eyes, the high, narrow, transparent forehead, the quivering, restless lip, all spoke of morbid tendencies and excitable nerves; and it was with a heart full of anxiety that Lady Ellison gave up her cherished little girl

to her sister-in-law's care. She returned to find that her misgivings were not without foundation. Gertrude was more nervous, more excitable, more tearful than ever, less apt at learning, having been so overdone with lessons that she had not only failed to acquire anything new, but had actually forgotten what she had learnt before. It was many years before Lady Ellison could counteract the mischief so unwittingly done; for her sister-in-law assured her with perfect truth that precisely the same plan had been pursued with Gertrude which was working out such delightful results in dear Geraldine. Delightful indeed! High-hearted, generous, buoyant, and self-reliant; but impulsive, wayward, passionate, and self-willed. Such was Geraldine Vivian at twelve, and such, in a much greater degree, was she at fifteen, when our story opens. All the germs of a noble character were hers, but all run wild, and misdirected. This was the mind and character that Lady Bournemouth vainly tried to control and direct with copy-books, dictionaries, and sums. It was little enough she knew of Geraldine; but that little showed her something

beyond even the mighty power of grammars and verbs, and which she therefore tried with all her force to crush and extinguish. And yet, as we have said before, Lady Bournemouth was fond of her daughter, almost as fond as she was of her son. But this fondness had developed itself very differently in the two cases. She was too much a woman of the world not to know the scanty allowance the world makes for the faults and follies of women, and the impatience of a rigid self-control in those who mingle much with it. But having obtained possession of this partial truth, she proceeded to act upon it by suppressing, or, when that was not possible, by ignoring, every demonstration of feeling on the part of her daughter; so, whereas Lord Lindon was encouraged and applauded for everything he did or said, she was as continually checked and reproved. The unfair and injudicious difference made between the two might have been productive of dislike and jealousy without end, but for Geraldine's generous and affectionate nature, and her brother's good temper and easy disposition. So they had grown up, be-

coming fonder of each other every day; Geraldine listening with rapt eagerness to the praises of his amiable disposition, handsome face, and fascinating manner, which from time to time reached her ear; and he proudly anticipating the sensation which her beauty, grace, and undoubted talent would make when she should come out in the world. For, as we have before said, she had talent of a very high order, more, perhaps, than intellect. Without being a great thinker, or even a great reader, she could have done or learnt anything to which she gave her mind, easily and well. Had the smallest pains been taken to make her lessons interesting and agreeable to her, Lady Bournemouth would have had no reason to complain of her backwardness and indifference.

But we have made a somewhat long digression, and must return.

"Where is Miss Wood?" inquired Gertrude.

"Out for the afternoon, and so are Arthur and Mr Lawrance."

"Mr Lawrance! who is he?"

"Arthur's new tutor. Haven't you seen him?"

"No, what is he like? Agreeable?"

"Yes, very agreeable, and good-looking, I think. I like him very well! He seems very kind to Charlie."

"That would be quite enough to make you like him, even if he were ugly and stupid. But come, put on your bonnet, for mamma will expect me back."

CHAPTER II.

Fair mien, discourses, civil exercises,
And all the blazon of a gentleman.

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,
Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons through the gilded pale.

In Memoriam.

While introducing Geraldine, her mother, and brother to the reader, we have said nothing of her father. It must not be supposed from this that he was a cipher in his family. Lord Bournemouth, in his younger days, had been remarkable for his beauty, his wit, and more than all for his numerous and, to say the truth,

somewhat discreditable *escapades*. He had served with credit and distinction in the Peninsula, and well proved that the hereditary bravery of his family had descended to him, together with other more questionable qualities. Socially, no man ever, perhaps, enjoyed more decided and brilliant success. On all subjects of art and taste, from the greatest to the least, his fiat was infallible. His approval at once stamped the merits of an author, a musician, an actor, an old painting, or a young beauty. Nor was he less at home on the subject of horses, dogs, everything, in a word, connected with sporting. Of racing he was passionately fond; and this taste, combined with a total inaptitude for business, and an easy temper that shrunk from any exertion, had embarrassed his income very considerably. Not that this disturbed him for a moment; on the contrary, he continued to spend as lavishly as if all the gold in California had been at his command; contenting himself with remarking that when he dropped off, Lindon must look into it, and set things straight.

Lord Lindon, however, was scarcely the sort

of man whom one would expect to repair the broken fortunes of his family, having more than his father's indolence, and less than his father's talents. But he possessed a few very good notions on the subject of honesty and honour,—where picked up, Heaven only knows; and was capable, under energetic guidance, of taking a leisurely survey of his affairs; a species of view which no member of the Bournemouth family had obtained for many generations back. At present he was in total ignorance of there being any necessity for making the effort; he saw himself and his family surrounded with everything that money could purchase, and supposed that money was given for it—or if it was not, that was no business of his. He and his father were very good friends. It was impossible to quarrel with Lord Lindon; and Lord Bournemouth was too old, and too thoroughly invalided with gout, to feel jealousy of his son's great popularity—which, indeed, he considered rather creditable to himself than otherwise.

As for his daughter, he looked upon her as

a mere toy, a pretty doll. Very fond of her in a placid way, it never occurred to him that she possessed thought, feeling, or opinions, and he never saw her but for an hour or two after dinner, any evening they happened to be alone. He left everything to Lady Bournemouth, and as long as Geraldine was nicely dressed, and seemed cheerful and lively, took it for granted all was right. For her part she loved him with a strength of affection that was extraordinary, considering how little pains he took to draw it out. It might be one thing, it might be another—his helpless and suffering condition perhaps, for Geraldine had a tender heart, as all good women have. Or it might be the calm fortitude with which he bore his sufferings, and showed that his courage was as high and undaunted as ever, though exercised passively, instead of actively; for Geraldine reverenced strength, as all women do, whether good or bad;—who knows? One thing is certain, she loved him as few daughters love the best and most devoted of fathers.

There was a younger son also; the boy who has been mentioned in conjunction with Mr Lawrance, the new tutor.

Geraldine soon found Mr Lawrance a pleasant addition to the school-room, for though he and Arthur had their own study, they took their meals with her and her governess.

She had scarcely seen any young man before, except her brother; certainly not on intimate terms, and it was a new and agreeable experience. His manners were to a certain extent gentleman-like; he had plenty to say for himself, and said it well, for he was very quick, and in some respects clever. With these qualifications, what wonder if Geraldine found his society enlivening; especially in the utter dulness of her London life, where she had not even the few amusements and interests which the country afforded? She liked to hear him tell Arthur stories of his school and college life; it opened glimpses of a new world to her, and she would by look, if not by word, encourage him to proceed; at which he was extremely flattered, notwithstanding the good

opinion that he entertained of his own merits, and powers of conversation.

His position in society was humble. His father, who was of a good family, and held an appointment in the H. E. I. C's. Civil Service, had died eighteen years previously in India. He had married a woman beneath him in rank, who was then left a widow with a son and daughter to provide for, and a hundred and twenty pounds per annum for her sole income. A desperate struggle it had been, for she had ambition enough to resolve that her son, at least, should have an education befitting his father's station. She contrived to place him on the foundation of one of our public schools; how she contrived to keep him there, and to maintain herself and her daughter at home, was a wonder to all her friends. The boy, ambitious and persevering like herself, had some talents, and a marvellously retentive memory, of which endowments he made so good a use as to obtain, when arrived at the proper age, a scholarship at a small hall at Oxford. A pinching, striving life he had of it, especially as his good looks, and a certain fascina-

tion peculiarly his own, brought him into the notice of a set considerably above him in rank and wealth, though, with admirable resolution, he refused to join in their expensive pleasures. On the whole, however, things prospered with him. "Lucky Lawrance" had become a proverb, and it was not the least part of his luck that he had the opportunity of saving the life of a young lord, who, being unable to swim, had adventured himself on the river in an outrigger. The young man's father, the Duke of Dorchester, wishing to prove his gratitude, had promised to present Mr Lawrance to a living, whenever he had one vacant, and in the meantime recommended him to Lady Bournemouth, then in search of a tutor for her son Arthur.

Having given this account of his antecedents, we will leave him for the present, and turn to the drawing-room in Belgrave Square, where Lord and Lady Bournemouth and their eldest son are sitting. Peals of laughter resound from the apartment over-head; the sofa is evidently being wheeled violently about the room, and every now and then thumps are heard, as if

the unseen cause of the noise would break through the ceiling.

"What a noise Geraldine is making!" said Lady Bournemouth, peevishly, "that child is such a romp!" She stopped, as if expecting her husband to make some answer; none being forthcoming, she resumed her complaints.

"I don't think you care about it in the least, Frederick; and really I don't know what to do with her. Her spirits are terribly high! I quite tremble at the thought of bringing her out."

"Don't alarm yourself, my dear," returned Lord Bournemouth, placidly. "With her good looks she must be admired, and her very spirits will be so much the more in her favour, girls must have their fun as well as boys."

"At all events she will never be affected or missish, and that's a good thing," remarked Lord Lindon.

"So it is, and I am quite ready to admit it, but I dread her falling into the opposite extreme. Fancy, if my daughter were to turn out a mere hoyden!"

"Fancy!" said Lord Bournemouth, without looking up from his book, feeling that he was expected to say something.

His son looked amused. In a few minutes another thump was heard, louder than all the rest, which drew an angry exclamation from Lady Bournemouth. Lord Lindon left the room, and went up to the school-room, where Geraldine, her face flushed, and her hair in disorder, was playing with her little dog.

"Oh, here you are, Lindon! You beauty, be quiet!"

"Now, Cherry, you really must be quiet yourself. Your noise disturbs mamma."

"Very well; then, Charlie, pet, you must be very good and sedate, or else Lindon won't like you. Come and say 'how do you do?' to him." And she went up to her brother, and put the dog's paw in his hand.

"You absurd child!" he said, laughing; "will you ever be a rational being?"

"Not if a rational being is a proper, precise young lady; I detest missishness and young ladyism! I shall romp with Charlie till I'm eighty, just every bit the same!"

"I really believe you will. But put him down for the present; he monopolizes too much of your affection."

"No, he doesn't, and never will. I shall never love him as well as you!"

"Thank you," said her brother, composedly. "Hallo! what's the brute up to now?"

"Don't call him a brute! He's practising his last little trick, dear fellow. See there, isn't it clever? Mr Lawrance taught him that."

"So Mr Lawrance taught him that, did he?"

"Yes, and he is going to teach him something else. Oh, Mr Lawrance is so good-natured!"

"Indeed," said Lord Lindon, rather shortly.

"I don't think you like him, Lindon," remarked Geraldine, decidedly.

"Not very much. Though I don't know why I shouldn't either, for I have scarcely seen anything of him."

"Well, I like him *very* much," returned his sister, with an accent on the adverb.

"And why, pray?"

"Why do you dislike him?"

"I don't dislike him; I have only seen him once or twice, and shouldn't have noticed him particularly, but that you talked about him, and excited my curiosity."

"And now you are disappointed?"

"Not disappointed, for it is no odds to me whether he comes up to your description or not, but I don't think him particularly gentleman-like. He's all very well, but you led me to expect something out of the common."

"Well, then, we won't talk about him any more," said Geraldine, who placed great confidence in her brother's judgment, but was not particularly delighted when it ran counter to her own. "Gertrude was here to-day."

"Gertrude — was she?" exclaimed Lord Lindon, with more appearance of interest than he had yet exhibited. "What did she come for?"

"Why, to see me, to be sure," said Geraldine, testily. "Did you think she came to see you?—no such luck, I can tell you. What made you start in that extraordinary way?"

"Did I start?" said Lord Lindon, relaps-

ing into quiescence; "your abrupt manner, I suppose."

"I like that," cried Geraldine; "do you want me to break the news of Gertrude's visits gently to you? Lindon, why don't you marry? There—you are starting again!"

"My charge of abruptness is fully proved," said Lord Lindon. "What has come to you, Geraldine? what made you think of my marrying?"

"I don't know—talking of Gertrude, perhaps," said Geraldine, desperately, and looking her brother steadily in the face.

He returned her glance with great composure; then breaking out into a hearty laugh, exclaimed, "You silly child! match-making already, I see. It won't do, Cherry."

"And why not?" said Geraldine, still eyeing him curiously.

"Don't you know that people who are brought up together never do marry?"

"Sometimes they do; and, Lindon, I did think you liked her," said Geraldine, with grave simplicity.

"Like her! so I do like her, too much

to marry her perhaps. But there is the dressing-bell. You will come to the drawing-room after dinner? "

"If you think mamma will like it?" said Geraldine, doubtfully.

"I am sure she will; so mind you come."

CHAPTER III.

Allan-a-Dale has no faggot for burning,
Allan-a-Dale has no furrow for turning,
Allan-a-Dale has no fleece for the spinning,
Yet Allan-a-Dale has red gold for the winning.

ROKEBY.

"LINDON, I want a few minutes' conversation with you."

"An awful prelude, mamma; what do you want?" said Lord Lindon, coming up to the sofa where his mother was lying, one dusky evening. The candles had not been brought

in, and there was no light in the drawing-room but the flickering one of the fire.

"I scarcely know how to begin what I have to say," observed Lady Bournemouth, after a few moments' silence. Indeed, she seemed far from her usual composed tranquillity.

"Well, mamma?" said Lord Lindon, after a few minutes more had elapsed.

"Well, Lindon, the fact is, I think I have observed in you a liking—a preference—or whatever it may be—for Gertrude Ellison."

"And what then, mother?"

"By your not denying it, you tacitly admit the truth of my conjecture?" observed his mother, interrogatively.

"I may—or I may not—let that pass for the present. Do you mean that there is any objection?"

"She has no money."

"But I have."

"No, you have not—there we come to the point. Your father's affairs are terribly embarrassed, more than he has any idea of. Little as I know of business, I know enough

to suppose that at his death you will find yourself in a very different position to that you occupy at present. It is as much as we can do to keep off bankruptcy during his life."

Lord Lindon rose abruptly, and walked two or three times up and down the room.

"This is all news to me, mother," he said.

"I know it: perhaps you ought to have been informed of the state of affairs before. But it was natural that we should both feel a reluctance in speaking on the subject; and even now, I do it on my own responsibility. Your father knows nothing about it."

"You may be mistaken, mamma."

"Don't flatter yourself that I am. If there is any mistake, it is not in our favour. But if you take my advice, you will consult your father's man of business, and get some insight into his affairs. Should I indeed be mistaken, why, then, I will not say another word about Gertrude."

"Mamma," he said one day, after being out all the morning, "you were but too right!"

"I knew I was," she replied; and added with real concern, "but I am sorry for your disappointment."

"Disappointment! you may well say so. I never saw a girl I liked a quarter as well, but that is over. I know what I want, and that is money. Love in a cottage won't suit me!"

"I am glad you take so proper a view of the subject," said his mother. "Well, never mind; you will do better. She herself is a nice girl enough; but you will make a better marriage."

"At the same time I must tell you," said Lord Lindon, looking straight out of the window, "that if I thought she had the least preference for me, I should feel bound to propose; for I certainly may have led her to expect it. But as it is —. Mother, I'm off."

"Are you going out, do you mean?" inquired his mother, sinking back languidly among her cushions, rejoicing that the business was over. "Will you do a commission for me at Hancock's, if you are going that way?"

"It was America I meant," observed Lord Lindon, mildly, "and if you have any commissions there, I shall be happy to execute them."

"America!" exclaimed Lady Bournemouth, starting up, "Why do you go there?"

"To get cigars," returned her son, still looking straight out of the window. "Seriously, mother, I have always wished to go there, and this seems about the opportunity. I hope Gertrude will be married when I come back."

A rapid review of the circumstances convinced Lady Bournemouth that her son's plan was the wisest.

"Well, well," she said, "what must be, must be. Shall you see her before you go?"

"Why? She is not for me, and I am not like the children in the street, who stand staring at the cakes they can't get."

And so Lord Lindon went to America.

"Of course he likes travelling; every one must," said Geraldine to herself; "I did think he liked Gertrude better."

As to Gertrude, Lord Lindon was right when he intimated that she did not care for

him except as a cousin. Sorry for his departure she certainly was, but it was more on Geraldine's account than her own. She made it her chief care to see as much of her cousin as possible, until, the season drawing to a close, the Ellisons left London for their country seat. The Bournemouths had already gone, a week earlier that usual, much to Geraldine's disgust; for she had never before spent an autumn and winter at Avonbury without Lord Lindon being there for some considerable time. Now she was entirely thrown on her own resources, being at the same time deprived of many of the country amusements which she had pursued under his protection.

We are wrong in saying entirely, however, for Mr Lawrance, of course, accompanied them, and now began to devote himself systematically to attracting Geraldine's notice. He had done so already; but that was no fault of his; she had made the first advances to intimacy, and, trifling as they were, he resolved to follow them up. We do not know if, at this time, he had any more definite end in view than the gratification of his vanity; very possibly not;

but seeing the coast clear, and Geraldine very ready to seek for amusement wherever she could find it, he had few scruples of honour to restrain him. It was only to be expected that he should be fascinated by such an attractive girl as Geraldine; all the more so that she was so superior to the women he had seen hitherto, and was at the same time so perfectly simple-minded and unaffected that, without meaning anything by it, she occasionally gave him what he might have interpreted as encouragement. Lord Lindon's absence was an unfortunate circumstance, for when at home he insisted upon making Geraldine his companion, and would not hear of her being in the schoolroom, or with her governess, a minute beyond the expiration of the fixed hour of lessons. Indeed he often, in defiance of Lady Bournemouth and her rules, invaded the scholastic precincts during those sacred periods, carried his sister off by the strong hand, and left Miss Wood lamenting that Geraldine's studies should be so recklessly interrupted. And as the most perfect freedom of discussion existed between them, Geraldine communicated all her ideas

on people and things to him, thereby giving them the benefit of daylight, and a good deal of often adverse criticism. He was the safety-valve for the raw and fanciful notions which generated in her active brain, and which would otherwise have been pent up, to spread and grow in silence. Lord Lindon was quite unconscious of the value of his society to her; Avonbury was often dull, and Geraldine and her theories very amusing; therefore he systematically drew her out, and led her to unfold them, without being aware of the real use and importance of what he was doing. The safety-valve was now shut, and Geraldine left to her own unguided judgment, which, like that of other clever imaginative girls of fifteen, was very little to be trusted.

CHAPTER IV.

On English ground
You understand the letter .... ere the fall
How Adam lived in a garden. All the fields
Are tied up fast, with hedges, nosegay-like;
The hills are crumpled plains; the plains parterres;
The trees, round, woolly, ready to be clipped;
And if you seek for any wilderness
You find at best a park.

E. BARRETT BROWNING.

Pleasant it was, when woods were green
And winds were soft and low,
To lie amid some silvan scene,
Where, the long drooping boughs between,
Shadows dark and sunlight sheen
Alternate come and go.—LONGFELLOW.

"CHERRY-BLOSSOM," said Arthur, the day after they arrived in the country, "are you not glad to be here?"

"Yes, on the whole, for London was very dull. But there is nothing to do here."

"Ah, you will miss Lindon. However, papa says now I can ride so much better, we may go out in the park together, without a groom, so we will have plenty of rides; and then you can play at cricket with me and Mr Lawrance."

This did not suit Geraldine, who had often played at cricket with Arthur, but did not fancy the addition of Mr Lawrance; so she replied, "If Mr Lawrance is going to play with you, you won't want me. Besides, you are so much improved in your playing that you are more than a match for me, and with Mr Lawrance, it would be more unequal still. So I will sit in the shade and watch you."

"That will never do, Cherry," said Arthur. "Half the fun will be gone."

"It must do, my dear," was the answer, "for mamma was saying yesterday that she hoped I should leave off playing at boys' games; and when she has once said 'I hope,' the next step will be 'you must.' Besides, you will never improve if you are to play

down to me, and it would be nothing but that now."

"Well, then, I suppose we must give it up," sighed Arthur. "I wish there were no such things as young ladies. I know mamma is preparing to make you a young lady."

"Mamma has very bad materials to work upon, I am afraid," was Geraldine's laughing answer. So the affair was settled, and henceforth, whenever Arthur played at cricket, Geraldine brought her work, and sat down under the neighbouring trees to watch the game. She was always fond of it, and it derived a new element of interest from Mr Lawrance's presence; with Arthur's play she was perfectly acquainted, but Mr Lawrance's was for some time a subject of speculation. It was not what would have been considered good at the great public schools; still it was much better than any that Geraldine had been accustomed to see, and she watched it and commented upon it with the eagerness of a person used to make the most of small excitements.

"Mr Lawrance," she said one day, "why

did you not take another run when the ball came this way?"

"Because it was so easy to find, and the distance so short, I did not think I should have a chance."

"You were mistaken however, as I could have told you, for the grass is so slippery just here, no one can run very fast on it."

"You are a close calculator, Lady Geraldine."

"Geraldine is a very good judge," interposed Arthur. "She plays uncommonly well herself for a girl; only she wouldn't play any more after you came."

Geraldine blushed, and Miss Wood, seeing her embarrassment, said, "Lady Bournemouth did not wish your sister to play this year, Arthur; cricket is not a proper game for young ladies."

"All this is only practice," said Geraldine quickly, seeing Arthur ready to break out; "suppose we ask papa to let us have a regular match some day. I think there are boys enough in the neighbourhood."

"Oh do," said Arthur. "You ask, Cherry; papa always does what you ask him."

Mr Lawrance did not second the idea as readily as Geraldine had expected; the fact was, he knew that of those asked a large proportion would probably be public-school boys, at home for the holidays, and did not care to show his inferiority before them. Arthur was much captivated with the plan, and proceeded to discuss the people to be invited, the day and hour to be named, with great zeal. Lord Bournemouth's consent was asked, and obtained that evening;—not without strong remonstrances from his wife.

"I am really quite vexed about this match," she said, when out of Geraldine and Arthur's hearing; "it is my constant endeavour to interest Geraldine in the pursuits of a lady, instead of allowing her to follow her own unfortunate tastes, and join exclusively in her brother's amusements. Her face will turn perfectly red, her hands become coarse and large, and she will talk slang. It is bad enough to have her following Arthur about all day; but what will become of her if she is to make companions of ten or twenty school-boys, I am

at a loss to conceive. Frederick!" she continued, provoked at her husband's continued silence, "do you hear what I am saying?"

"I have been listening to every word attentively, my dear," returned Lord Bournemouth, with perfect placidity and politeness. "I have no doubt Geraldine could play in the match extremely well, if she tried; still there has been no question of her doing so, and her face and hands need not necessarily suffer from looking on. I have not the slightest intention of allowing her to make companions of any school-boys, and if I heard her use a word of slang, I should immediately forbid it. But I never have. As to Arthur, you know it was my will that he should go to school at once. If, to please you, I educate him at home for the present, I must insist on his having proper amusements and companions. A tutor is all very well, but a boy wants something else in his play hours; and even as a tutor, I should not myself, I think, have engaged Mr Lawrance."

By thus dexterously carrying the war into

the enemy's country, Lord Bournemouth, as he expected, diverted the attack from himself. Lady Bournemouth began to vindicate her selection, and for some time the question of the match was dropped. When it was resumed, he said, "My dear, let us have no more discussion about it. I have promised the children that they shall have this match. No really ladylike girl is ever the worse for mixing with boys; and if Geraldine takes to talking slang because her brother has a party once or twice in the summer, send Miss Wood away, and get a more efficient governess. I am sure you and she ought to be able to neutralise the poison of watching a game of cricket."

This settled the matter so decidedly, that Lady Bournemouth did not venture to forbid Geraldine's being present at the match, as she had intended.

As Mr Lawrance had expected, there were many better players than himself present. Geraldine speedily became aware that Charlie Richardson was a better bowler, William Harvey a better bat, and James Stanley quite as

good a field. After this day she no longer cared to watch his play, though she still went regularly to the cricket-ground, in order to please Arthur.

The discussion between Lord and Lady Bournemouth had two results. One was that Lady Bournemouth did not carry out a plan she had formed for separating Geraldine and Arthur; the other was that Lord Bournemouth, being rather pleased with his championship of his daughter, began to see more of her, with a view to discovering if she were really as boyish in her tastes as was represented. It was but a very little more, and yet it sufficed to show him something of her character, and to convince him that her mother's fears as to her becoming wild and rough were groundless. But he saw that she liked liberty and freedom, and therefore he would not keep her with him as much as he might otherwise have done; not guessing that she would rather wait on him, or read to him, for hours at a time, than take the pleasantest walks or rides. "Geraldine," he said one day, "can you come

and do some things for me? But it is a shame to keep you in while the sun is shining so brightly."

"Oh no, papa, not at all. I would much rather be with you," replied Geraldine, with alacrity; "what can I do for you?"

"In the first place, I want you to write a letter to Lindon. Begin by telling him I have an attack of gout coming on, and can't write myself."

"Oh, papa, are you going to be ill?" said Geraldine, dropping her pen in dismay.

"I am afraid so, my dear; probably by to-morrow I shall be quite laid up."

"I am so sorry," said Geraldine, the tears gathering in her eyes; "I can't bear to think of your suffering such pain. I wish I could do anything for you. But I suppose you would rather have mamma to nurse you when you are really ill."

"I should like very much to have you too; I have no doubt you would make a very good little nurse. But, my dear child, you must not distress yourself in this way. There, don't cry; at this rate you will

suffer more than I shall. Come, take up your pen again, and let us go on."

Geraldine obeyed, and wrote some business details which her father dictated.

"Now you can tell him I am very sorry he is away, for as I expect a pretty sharp attack, I shall not be able to have any shooting parties this year."

"I shall put a parenthesis, if you don't mind," said Geraldine, "to tell him again how much I miss him."

"I suppose you do," said Lord Bournemouth; "you used to ride and walk so much with him. Tell him I miss him also, for I have no one to drive me out when I can't drive myself."

"Oh, papa," said Geraldine, "won't you let me drive you? I assure you I can drive quite well. Lindon said I was a very good whip."

"Are you?" said Lord Bournemouth, stroking her hair, "that would be very pleasant. Well, some day when I am pretty well again, and the ponies quieter than they

are at present, we will try. I always wished that your mother could drive, but she was a great deal too nervous. She tried once, and failed to upset me into a ditch. I don't think you are nervous."

"No, not at all; and I am very fond of driving. Shall I say anything else to Lindon?"

"No, I think there is nothing else at present. I will write myself by-and-by. Now give me that *Review* and the paper-cutter; shut the window, and draw down the blind half-way. Thank you, that will do nicely. Give me a kiss, my darling, and run out to Arthur, who, I dare say, is waiting for you."

Geraldine followed all these directions faithfully, especially the two last. Arthur was just coming in from his cricket.

"Where have you been, Cherry?" he said. "I was watching for you the whole time, and Mr Lawrance said twice he wondered why you did not come."

"Did he?" said Geraldine; "I was with papa. But I am sorry you missed me."

"Oh, I guessed you were with papa; so, after a time, I almost gave up the hope of your coming. But I don't think Mr Lawrance did; for besides wondering why you did not come, he said once, when I gave a good ball, It's a pity Lady Geraldine could not see that."

"Did he play well himself?"

"Yes, pretty well; we had a very good game. Here he is."

"Arthur tells me you had a very good game, Mr Lawrance," said Geraldine; "I must come and look on to-morrow."

"It is a pity you were not there to-day," he said; "Arthur gets on well. I think if we played another match, and could get Charlie Richardson for our bowler, instead of William Harvey, we should have the best of it."

Geraldine wondered why Mr Lawrance seemed now to advocate a cricket-match, when before he had clearly not cared for it; and being unable to solve the problem, merely remarked, "I dare say we shall have another by-and-by; and probably Charlie

Richardson will play on whichever side we like. I must go in and find Miss Wood, to come for a walk."

"We'll come too, won't we, Mr Lawrance?" said Arthur. "It's not time to go in yet, and we may just as well walk as do anything else."

"I dare say Mr Lawrance won't care for a stupid walk, Arthur," said Geraldine. "If you want to come, do; but I am sure he would rather not."

"I am quite of Arthur's mind, Lady Geraldine," said Mr Lawrance, immediately. "I like a walk on a fine morning like this; if you have no objection."

"Pray come then, and we will go round by the Cow Common. It is the prettiest place about here, but I can never go to it, unless we have a gentleman with us, for Miss Wood is afraid of the cows. It is so tiresome! I took her there once, one fine morning like this, when all the cows were lying down. Their backs looked so nice and broad, that I couldn't help sitting down on one of them, and when it got up, I

really thought Miss Wood would have fainted. She wanted to drag me away, but she was afraid to come near; and since then she has never ventured into a field where there were any cows or oxen, because she says I play such wild tricks."

Mr Lawrance smiled, and Arthur laughed.

"So you do," he said; "you are the wildest Cherry-blossom that ever was grown. When we ride together will be the time to talk about wild tricks. I say, Cherry, we'll have a ride soon."

"My pony is still lame, my dear," said Geraldine. "I went to see him yesterday, and he looked so stupified with being in the stables. Oh, here is Miss Wood at last. Mr Lawrance is coming with us, so we are going to the Cow Common."

"I have no objection, if Mr Lawrance is coming," said Miss Wood; "indeed, I am very glad you should be able to take your favourite walk; though I am sure it is not safe for us to go alone."

"Oh, Miss Wood, I wish I could make you look at cows in the light I do!" said

Geraldine, comically. "We could have such nice walks, if you were not afraid. I would promise never to sit down upon their backs again, if it would do any good, but I know you are afraid of cows '*pures et simples*,' independently of their occupations."

Again Mr Lawrance smiled, as he said, "If you are satisfied with my escort, Miss Wood, and feel inclined to take any of these perilous walks, I hope you will make use of me. You know when I am disengaged."

"Thank you," replied Miss Wood; "it would be a very good arrangement, for, as Lady Geraldine says, our walks at present are rather circumscribed."

"Now here is the Cow Common," said Geraldine; "is it not lovely? Look at the thorns; papa says this is a bit of the real old country which has never been enclosed. Just fancy how pretty it must have been when there were deer, instead of cows, browsing under the trees, and lying down in the fern."

"It is beautitul," said Mr Lawrance; "I don't wonder that this is your favourite

walk. Is not that the oak fern growing there?"

"The oak fern! what is that?" said Geraldine.

"That is not its real name, but I forget what is—bracken, I think. I call it the oak fern, from the mark of an oak tree on its stalk. Have you never seen it? Arthur, just pick me a good stout piece of fern."

Arthur complied, and Mr Lawrance, cutting the stem, showed Geraldine the well-known resemblance of an oak tree, which was, however, new to her, from the fact of this fern growing nowhere about Avonbury, except in this one place.

"I believe the common people used to think it was the miniature of King Charles' oak," he said. "Whether they supposed this species of fern never grew before, I can't tell. Possibly they thought that the

'Angels who watch'd the guardian oak so well,'

also took care to keep the circumstance within the memory of man, by putting this mark here."

"You said you would read me something about King Charles' escape," said Arthur, "something more amusing than what they tell in the histories."

"The account in the Boscobel Tracts, you mean," said Mr Lawrance. "It is in the Library, and I will read it to you whenever you like."

"Pray let us hear it too," said Geraldine. "Miss Wood, have you ever read it? Suppose we have it this afternoon in the garden, before tea. That sort of story ought to be read out of doors in the summer."

"That will just do," said Arthur. "I do like a good escape. It's very good fun where King Charles is up in the tree, and the soldiers can't find him. That was a good story about those prisoners you read the other day; you would like that, Cherry. Mr Lawrance, won't you read it to her some other time? She likes having things read to her."

"I shall be delighted if Lady Geraldine likes it."

"Don't ask me," said Geraldine. "I

accept everything of that sort that is offered; so, unless you would really not mind it, you had better not put temptation in my way. Here is a cow—no, it is a bull, exactly before the gate. Now, Miss Wood, how shall we open it?"

Miss Wood immediately proposed to return, which Geraldine absolutely declined, and was proceeding to walk up to the gate, when Mr Lawrance settled the matter by driving the animal away, not before it had cast such threatening glances at Charlie, who accompanied them, that he thought it best to catch the dog up, and put it over the wall.

"I know Charlie will be tossed some day," said Geraldine, "he is so silly about provoking them. And then he runs back to me for protection, so probably I shall be tossed also. Arthur, how should I look, flying over the gate into the next field, with Charlie flying a little before me?"

"Geraldine!" said Miss Wood, "don't joke about such frightful things; it is not right. I am sure if that is to be the case, I shall be too

thankful for Mr Lawrance's protection; you will certainly involve yourself in a serious accident if you go on in this wild way. I wish Lord Bournemouth had not given you leave to ride alone with Arthur; he surely does not know how unfit you are to be trusted by yourself."

"Only in the park, Miss Wood," said Geraldine, "and only on the pony. No harm can happen to me with him; and I am not to ride the Hornet by myself. So you need not be alarmed."

"I am sure I can take care of her," said Arthur, "I know quite well what she can do, and what she can't; and I shan't let her do anything silly."

"I have no doubt you are singularly prudent, Arthur," said Mr Lawrance, laughing. "Lady Geraldine, there is Charlie bullying a ram, which has every intention of retaliating."

Accordingly, the ram turned round upon his small persecutor, and pursued him so fiercely, that Charlie, with a shriek, fled back to his mistress, throwing himself under her feet, and leaving her exposed to the attack of

his enemy, from which she was with some difficulty saved by Mr Lawrance. With a few more such incidents, the walk terminated; Geraldine being much pleased at having secured an ally who would enable her to ramble over the country in any direction she liked; and who seemed inclined to read to her as often as she wished;—an occupation to which she was very partial. The Boscobel Tracts proved a great source of amusement that evening, and Geraldine quite settled in her own mind that she would ask Mr Lawrance to read a great many other things to her out of books into which she was not allowed to look herself.

CHAPTER V.

Behold! The world of books is still the world:
And worldlings in it are less merciful,
And more puissant. For the wicked there
Are wing'd like angels. Every knife that strikes,
Is edged from elemental fire to assail
A spiritual life. The beautiful seems right,
By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong,
Because of weakness. Power is justified,
Though arm'd against St Michael. Many a crown
Covers bald foreheads. In the book world, true,
There's no lack, either of God's saints and kings,
That shake the ashes of the grave aside
From their calm locks, and, undiscomfited,
Look stedfast truths against Time's changing mask.

E. Barrett Browning.

Lord Bournemouth's anticipations proved correct; the next morning he was laid up with a very severe attack of gout. Geraldine

had never before seen him until he was convalescent; she was now allowed to come into his room during the actual continuance of the fit. She moved noiselessly about, doing any little thing that might be wanted, or sat by his bed-side with her knitting—the only work of which she had any knowledge — thinking she had never known how terrible a thing pain could be till she saw her father's ashy face, with the drops of perspiration standing on his forehead, and the muscles drawn and contracted in agony. Nor had she ever known till now how bravely and resolutely pain might be borne, how it might be crushed down by determined fortitude, and how dominant the strong will might become over the feeble body. Never, even in the severest paroxysms, did Lord Bournemouth allow a cry or groan to escape him, no expression of impatience crossed his lips, nor could the utmost extremity of suffering wring from him a word that was not kind and gentle. Indeed, he was generally, on these occasions, more uncomplaining and

considerate for others than usual; partly from the feeling of complete dependence, and partly from his pride, and keen sense of the ridiculous, inspiring him with an utter terror of sinking into a querulous, fretful invalid. Geraldine had always loved and admired him, but now she did so more than ever; and would with pleasure have sacrificed whole days to waiting in his room, for the smallest chance of being able to do him some trifling service. He would not allow her to spend more than an hour or two each day with him, as he liked her to go out with Arthur, and bring him back accounts of what they had been doing—very insignificant incidents in themselves, but deriving interest from her fresh, original manner of relating them. Her chief value, however, was as a reader. Lady Bournemouth had been accustomed to read aloud to her husband, when he was able to listen, but her throat was weak, her voice languid, and her interest in the subjects that amused him not keen enough to enable her to discuss any point that might arise. Geraldine, on the contrary,

liked most things, and read well what she liked. Nothing she enjoyed more than having what she called "a good talk" over a book, and she delighted to raise questions, and propose knotty problems, which she might solve with the new lights her father could bring to bear upon them.

"Mina," he said one day as she came softly into his room, carrying a basket of flowers in her hand, "have you been out?"

"Yes, papa, out in the woods, and then I came home by the kitchen-garden and hot-houses, and picked these flowers for you. Have you been asleep?"

"Yes, for a short time. Thank you for the flowers, my dear; bring them here, and let me look at them."

Lord Bournemouth knew little about flowers, and cared less, but as Geraldine had brought them to please him, he would not seem indifferent, and admired them with considerable judgment, thanking her again, with a smile on his worn, wearied face.

"Poor papa," said Geraldine, "you look so dreadfully tired!"

"It is weary work lying here, even at the best of times," he said with a slight sigh. "But, however, I am in very little pain just now. Take off your bonnet, and let us have some reading. Where did you leave off? Is the book nearly finished? I am getting rather tired of it—it is wonderful how few good novels are published now."

"I suppose you don't care for them now because you have read so many," said Geraldine. "I think most of them very amusing. It is so pleasant reading to you, papa, for you let me read all these nice novels, and Miss Wood won't let me look into one of them. What do you think She wanted to take 'Ivanhoe' from me the other day; but I resisted. Was I not right, papa? May I not read Scott's novels if I like?"

"Yes, to be sure you may, if you don't read them in lesson-time. Read them while you are young and fresh enough to enjoy them thoroughly, before cares of your own make Rebecca's and Rowena's seem tame, or an Ivanhoe of the nineteenth century throws

the Invanhoe of the book into the shade. Well, have you found the place?"

"Yes, papa; it is where Laura is debating whether she shall marry Charlie, or do as her mother wishes, and accept Sir James. What do you think she will do? What do you think she ought to do?"

"As she is a young lady in a novel, I have no doubt she will marry Charlie. What she ought to do, is more difficult to answer. I see no objection to Sir James myself; and then her mother wished it."

"Yes; but, papa, she did not love him."

"Well, what then? Don't look shocked, you romantic child; she might have grown to love him. And he is a gentleman in every sense, whereas, you will excuse me for saying, Charlie is neither more nor less than a snob."

"Charlie *is* a snob," said Geraldine. "But supposing he had been nice and gentlemanlike, and all that, don't you think she would have done better to marry him than Sir James, whom she didn't care about? I don't like to

hear people put money before love and suiting; it doesn't seem natural."

"But it was not merely money. Charlie was in a much lower rank of life than Laura, and suiting includes suitability of ideas, education, and habits, as well as disposition. Class differences, though subtle, are very powerful, and are quite as likely to cause unhappiness as differences of temper and character."

"That is to say," said Geraldine, slowly, "you think if she had married Sir James, who was really a very good sort of man, she would have been happier with him, though she was not in love with him, than with Charlie, of whom she was so fond, because Sir James was in her own class of life, and Charlie was not?"

"I dare say she would; though, to state the case fairly, you must assume Charlie to have been Sir James' equal in character and disposition, which was certainly not the case. All other things being equal, I am clearly against *mésalliance*, both for men and women, but more especially for women."

"But, papa, does that seem right? Ought

there to be such a distinction of classes? And I am sure I read the other day that it is a very good thing that there should be intermarriages between different ranks."

"As to whether there ought to be such a distinction of classes, here it is, and as we did not make it, we cannot unmake it, and had better not run our heads against a wall by trying to do so. And if we could do away with the present distinctions, and begin afresh, every one starting equal, we should find that they would build themselves up again in some shape. In every society some will float to the top, while others remain at the bottom."

"In a republic?" said Geraldine.

"Just as much as under any other form of government;—the only difference being that in a republic the aristocracy is generally one of money, that being the most tangible and comprehensible form of superiority when actual rank is done away with. And as to whether an aristocracy of money is less proud and exclusive than one of birth, I can only tell you to read and judge for yourself. It will give you something to think about."

"Is there no such thing as an aristocracy of virtue and intellect?" said Geraldine, sighing.

"Not till human nature is slightly remodelled," said Lord Bournemouth, with a smile. "Virtue and intellect don't always go hand in hand, and riches and power don't range themselves on the side of virtue when intellect is wanting. And then poor virtue goes to the wall, and might becomes right. No, commend me to an hereditary and territorial aristocracy, who have a name and standing to maintain, and value the people to whom their younger branches really belong, from whom their ranks are continually recruited. That is my idea, though many of us fall sadly short of it."

"That brings us back to the question of marriages," said Geraldine. "You have not answered what I said about the mixture of classes being a good thing."

"So it is a good thing, undoubtedly, in the political economy point of view, good for both classes; but when it comes to a question of individuals, to whom political economy does not apply, it seldom turns out happily. I

have known a good many cases in my time, but very few answered; and those that did, were not the best sort of people of either class. I should be sorry if any member of my family made the experiment; for I well know the confusion, worry, and heart-burnings that are the general result."

"You will have no sympathy for poor Laura; and she does marry Charlie, for I have peeped on to the end."

"She ought not to want sympathy, since Charlie is to suit her so perfectly."

"But she does want it, for I can see that he is not at all kind to her."

"Ah," said Lord Bournemouth, "just what I should have expected of him. Well, suppose you begin reading; if they make out a very good case for Laura, I dare say I shall be able to squeeze out a little pity."

The reading had scarcely continued for more than half an hour, when Lady Bournemouth entered.

"Dear me, Geraldine reading, and one of those trashy novels, too. My dear Lord Bournemouth, why don't you let her read that

book of travels in which you are so much interested, or something improving, and leave the novels to me?"

Geraldine looked alarmed, and Lord Bournemouth replied, with a smile lurking round the corners of his mouth: "Thank you, my dear, I shall be most grateful for your services; but as you can't read very long at a time, I may as well avail myself of hers also. And I like to hear what she has to say about the novels."

"Nothing very wise, I am afraid," said Lady Bournemouth, patting her daughter's hair. "This poor little head will be full of nothing but nonsense and love scenes. Geraldine, I have been thinking that it would be a very good thing if you were to learn a little Latin now and then. Mr Lawrance has plenty of time to teach you, and it is a pity not to seize the opportunity when it offers."

"Oh, mamma!" said Geraldine, with a look of blank dismay, "I am sure I have not time to learn it. There is French, and German, and Italian, and Spanish,—I am learning all, and don't know one except French. Pray let

me off the Latin—if I knew it, I should never have time to open a Latin book."

"Nonsense; you don't learn any more than most girls, or know as much. Lord Bournemouth, I beg you will speak to her; you must see the importance of her making the most of her time while she is in the schoolroom."

"I rather agree with Mina," said Lord Bournemouth, laughing. "If she masters the literatures of England, France, Spain, Germany, and Italy, while she is in the schoolroom, she won't have much time left on her hands for Latin."

Lady Bournemouth looked, and was, extremely angry, but she made it a rule never to have a dispute with her husband before a third person, and therefore said carelessly: "Well, perhaps you are right; we had better not begin Latin for a month or two, at all events. Geraldine, it is quite time for you to go to Miss Wood; give me the book, and I will go on reading."

When Geraldine had left the room, Lord Bournemouth observed, "I see you are vexed

with me, my dear, but I really must beg you not to take Mr Lawrance away from Arthur. If the boy doesn't go to school, I must insist on his being properly worked at home. It is not only the actual loss of time, but the disorder that a girl introduces into a school-room, that I mind. Geraldine has plenty to do apparently —indeed I suspect myself, if she had fewer lessons, she would learn more; however, that is your affair, not mine. Only pray let there be no mixing of school-rooms, for I know how fatal that is to work. I dare say Arthur will grow up a prig under this home system, but I can't have him a fool as well."

"If you object," said Lady Bournemouth, "of course I must give it up. But I must say I did wish her to have a little more steady work."

"There I think you are mistaken. Even if she did learn all you propose, it would only load her memory with lumber she would have no means of using. Much better give her time to work her brains a little;—read less, and think and compare more. Her notions are unusually crude, and I wish you would let

her read more novels. A good novel is not a bad way of getting experience at second hand, and it is rather a dangerous experiment to start in the world without any."

"Frederick, you upset all my plans. It has always been my wish that Geraldine should be educated in a thoroughly superior manner, and her mind stored with knowledge that will be really useful to her, so that throughout life she shall possess rational tastes and occupations. And now, after all the trouble I have taken to achieve this object, you propose, just when she is becoming fit to acquire and use valuable information, to let her time be wasted, and her imagination run wild, over foolish sentimental stories."

"I never proposed that they should be foolish or sentimental," said Lord Bournemouth, with the peculiar dry coolness that always irritated his wife. "You do not distinguish between information and education. I think a first-class novel is a great help to education. However, do just as you please. By-the-by, I have once or twice thought of asking you if you know anything of Mr

Lawrance beyond Dorchester's recommendation?"

"Nothing—of course I thought that was enough. Have you anything against him?"

"Not at all; and if you are satisfied, so am I. And Arthur seems to like him. I may have thought his manner a little forward at times, perhaps."

"It is that," said Lady Bournemouth, thoughtfully; "but one cannot have everything, and I really think he is painstaking and conscientious. Besides, we see very little of him, and Miss Wood makes no complaint."

"Oh, it is not enough for that—a mere shade—and, as you say, we cant have everything. Only—"

"Pray let me arrange your pillows," interrupted Lady Bournemouth, dreading more doubts and objections. "I see you are uncomfortable;—and shall I not go on with the book?"

"Yes, please do," said Lord Bournemouth, resigning himself to his wife's monotonous voice, after Geraldine's animated tones.

"This is a very stupid book," she said

presently. "How it can forward Geraldine's education, I am at a loss to conceive. So unnatural to make a girl like Laura marry that foolish, under-bred young man."

"And yet one has known such instances," said Lord Bournemouth. "Witness Miss Seymour, and that foolish, under-bred young man, Mr Hogg."

"Oh, don't mention that as an illustration, pray; it puts me quite out of patience. Never was an affair so mismanaged. Mrs Seymour was really so credulously blind. The girl herself must have had very inferior tastes and ideas, for they tell me she is quite happy."

"How sad!" said Lord Bournemouth, drawing down the corners of his mouth. "There is nothing so demoralizing in this story, for I believe the heroine is miserable."

"That is quite right," said Lady Bournemouth, brightening up, "that is the natural and inevitable end of any right thinking girl who suffers herself to be so deluded; and if stories of this sort must be written, it is quite proper that they should show

the real consequences of such a step, and not dress it up in false attractions. It should be a warning, not an example."

"Very true," said Lord Bournemouth, "a warning to daughters, and a warning to mothers."

But the last part of the sentence being smothered in a yawn, it is doubtful whether Lady Bournemouth derived any benefit from it.

CHAPTER VI.

I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and Neologism),
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education—tongues, not books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics, brushed with extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.

* * * * *

I learnt much music,—such as would have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished * * *

* * * * And I drew costumes
From French engravings, Nereids neatly draped,
With smirks of simmering godship. I washed in,
From nature, landscapes (rather say, washed out),

* * * * *

Because she liked accomplishments in girls.

AURORA LEIGH.

IN due time Lord Bournemouth's fit of gout left him, but left him so weak that

his doctor ordered change of air, to which he, nothing loth, agreed. For he was beginning to find Avonbury frightfully dull, and, as he observed, "Geraldine was a very good little girl, and a very nice little girl, but she was not society." He did not mention Lady Bournemouth, so it is to be presumed that he included her in the category of people who, though very nice and good, were not society. Brighton was the place fixed upon, with which he was very well satisfied, for several of his friends were there for the winter, and he could look forward to their dropping in upon him when he was too ill to go to them, or to undergo the fatigue of having them in his house. Besides, he could there give the little parties for which he was so famous, and which, whether in London or elsewhere, he always contrived to make pleasanter than any one else's parties. Geraldine was troubled at her father's going, but not disappointed at not going herself; which was well, as Lady Bournemouth at once negatived the idea, when it was suggested by her husband. He ac-

quiesced in her decision, as he generally did in anything that concerned his daughter; his resistance to her theories being merely verbal, and for the sake of argument. To carry it into practice would have required an amount of exertion he was not prepared to make for anything. So Geraldine and Arthur were left at Avonbury to prosecute their education through the winter months, she being admonished by her mother to keep up her French, and pay great attention to her German; not to neglect her singing or drawing, and practise four hours a day; and above all things to try and improve in her handwriting, her mode of expressing herself, and her manners; and by her father, to "be a good little girl, do as Miss Wood told her, and not break the Hornet's knees."

She was extremely dull when first left alone; and the dulness did not decrease, but rather grew, as the autumn days and their glories of red leaves, and romance of blue mists and crimson sunsets, faded away into dreary, muddy, English winter. Riding with Arthur ceased to furnish any excite-

ment; they scoured the country, with the groom behind them, within the certain number of miles which formed the extent of their radius, and explored every nook and cranny of the park by themselves, mounted on their ponies, until the whole business seemed as flat as anything else.

"Oh, Arthur!" exclaimed Geraldine one day, as they paced soberly forth on the said ponies, "it is so tiresome that Willis will keep the Hornet so quiet. He says 'his Lordship wouldn't consider it safe if he had more sperrut.' I don't believe his Lordship would care a bit about it."

"It's very dull, certainly," said Arthur, "but still I don't know—the Hornet has plenty of sperrut in him, and it would be a bore if anything happened. I say, Cherry, the first frost that comes, suppose I teach you to skate?"

"Oh do, Arthur. I know I could skate beautifully if I tried."

"Wouldn't Miss Wood object?"

"I shall raise the standard of rebellion if she does; and then she will write to mamma,

and I shall write to papa, and I dare say papa will say yes. Come, I am tired of going at this steady pace; let us have one good scamper before we go in."

"Off we go then," returned Arthur; and off they did go accordingly, at a speed that made Geraldine's curls whistle in the wind, and deprived her for the time of the power of speech. She did find voice enough to cry out as they came to the rabbit warren, "Keep to the path!" Arthur was several yards in front of her, and could not clearly hear what she said; he saw the path was slippery, and thought she was cautioning him against it; to her alarm, therefore, he turned aside. Again she cried, "Keep to the path! Take care of the holes!" but too late. The pony put his foot into one, stumbled with such violence as to throw Arthur out of the saddle, recovered himself, and sped on, dragging along the poor child, one of whose feet remained fixed in the stirrup. Never, to the latest hour of her life, did Geraldine forget the agony of that horrible moment. She could do nothing; to pursue too closely would be worse than folly; she dared not re-

main behind; besides, her pony had become almost unmanageable with terror, and when she tried to hold it in, plunged and reared so violently as almost to unseat her. The whole thing only lasted about two minutes; a man's figure appeared from behind a thorn bush, and to her great joy she recognised Mr Lawrance. He, putting himself in the way, stopped the pony with little difficulty, and extricated Arthur, who was bruised and half stunned, but not otherwise hurt.

Geraldine's gratitude could scarcely find words in which to express itself; again and again she repeated that she could never thank him enough, and that to the end of her life she would remember what he had done for her. She did not know how she loved Arthur, how he had twined himself around her very heartstrings, until she had so nearly lost him. From this day Mr Lawrance had a new interest for her. He had saved Arthur's life, establishing an undoubted claim on her gratitude; and gratitude very easily slips into liking. Deficiencies of manner and good breeding were unnoticed in what she

considered his sterling qualities; and indeed the former were not so frequent or so striking as to be quickly perceptible to an inexperienced girl. Formerly she had been indifferent to his society, and took no pains to conceal it, except at the very first, when he had the attraction of novelty; now, if he seemed to wish to talk to her, she would not only suffer but give him encouragement to do so, so fearful was she of hurting his feelings by a rebuff. She took almost an exaggerated view of the service he had rendered her; for Arthur, at this time, was the one great interest and passion of her life, and anything done for him, she valued fifty times more than if it had been done for herself.

This Mr Lawrance was not slow in perceiving. Considering the incident in every point of view, as, indeed, was but natural, for incidents of any sort were scarce at Avonbury, especially incidents of which he was the hero, he wished at first it had been Geraldine herself whom he had saved; for himself and his own advancement being the point on which all his views of external objects turned, he simply

preferred that to happen which best suited his own ideas and schemes, independently of the welfare of those around him, even of those he liked best. But having once clearly established that what had happened was precisely the most calculated to further those ideas and schemes, it next occurred to him that he had not felt happy when he saw her pony struggling with her, and that he should not have liked to have seen her face cut, scratched, and bruised, as Arthur's was, or her long yellow hair dabbled with blood, and torn by briars. "For it is, undeniably, the most beautiful face I have ever seen, and she is the nicest girl," was the conclusion of his reflections.

It now became an established custom, that Mr Lawrance should accompany Geraldine and Miss Wood in their daily walks. For Miss Wood lived in a constant state of apprehension as to the result of her pupil's "wild ways," and a man who could not only drive away cows, but stop a runaway pony, must be a valuable resource in every emergency. Geraldine found her profit in this arrangement, as it gave her a great deal more liberty than she had for-

merly enjoyed. If Miss Wood pronounced any of her enterprises to be too dangerous, she had only to appeal to Mr Lawrance, and his opinion to the contrary being obtained, no further difficulty was made. From appealing to him on matters of fact, she proceeded to appeal to him on matters of opinion, and many a long discussion was the consequence. In these discussions, Geraldine and Mr Lawrance usually took one side, and Miss Wood the other! Miss Wood, most often in the right, being invariably worsted by Mr Lawrance's showy reading, and Geraldine's bright young wits.

And so the winter wore on—not quite so drearily as it had threatened—and when spring came, Lord Bournemouth was tired of Brighton, and disgusted with the east winds; so, some time before Easter, he and Lady Bournemouth went to London for the season. Geraldine and Arthur were immediately sent for, as Lady Bournemouth determined that her daughter should have, in her last school-room year, a long uninterrupted course of masters under her own immediate eye, and try whether, by hard practising, her singing could not be

worked up to the requisite drawing-room, and her German and Italian to the requisite conversation pitch.

"I am really quite pleased with Geraldine's progress," she said to her husband; "not only is her German so much improved as to be apparent even to me, but the whole tone of her mind is so much more formed. She can converse on most subjects in a rational manner, and her range of interest seems to be enlarged. I hope you will acknowledge now, what I have always told you, that Miss Wood is a really superior finishing governess."

"If Miss Wood has enlarged the range of Geraldine's interest it must be nothing less than a miracle," returned Lord Bournemouth. "To me the child seems to be just as much a child as ever; she talks more fluently on subjects about which a girl cant possibly be qualified to form an opinion, but that I take to be a sign of approaching young ladyhood. You may send her here when we return from our drive, and she shall read this *Review* to me. Some one said it is very good, and I don't think you would care about it."

"My dear Frederick," said his wife, stopping short with an air of great decision, "pray remember we are not in the country. You know I am always ready, day and night, to do anything for you you may want, but I must beg that Geraldine's time may not be taken up at this very important period of her life. She has a very little space left her to complete her education, and the utmost industry will be necessary to bring it up to anything like the ordinary standard."

Lord Bournemouth being in London with the means of amusement at hand, did not care so much about his daughter's society; besides, though he could insist on detached points with great firmness, he was not capable of carrying out a system; therefore he gave up the question at once, saying, "I should be very ungrateful, my dear, if I could ever forget all you have done for me, and very sorry to vex you or interfere with your plans; pray do just as you please; and if you will be good enough to read the *Review* to me, I shall be very much obliged; or if you are tired or engaged, I will read it myself."

"I shall not be the least tired, I assure you. Here is the carriage. I must just go down and see if Geraldine is at her drawing lesson, and I shall be ready for you in ten minutes."

CHAPTER VII.

'Twas sin to smile, 'twas sin to laugh,
'Twas sin to sport and play;
And heavier than a hermit's fast
Was each dull holiday.—AYTOUN.

"WILLIAM, how stupid you are this evening! Pray talk; we see you so seldom that you needn't sit poking over a book all the evening."

The speaker was Mr Lawrance's sister Emily; a handsome, lively girl of eighteen, and the scene was a dark, dingy little parlour in a small street in the City. This was his home, and here he used to come and spend an evening three or four times while the Bourne-

mouth family were in London. Oftener than that he could not make up his mind to face the dulness of the establishment.

On the opposite side of the table sat his mother; a great contrast to her two children, except in the matter of good looks, to which she also must have had some pretensions in her day. She was now a hard-featured, gloomy woman, with a slow dogmatic voice, and very deliberate and decided manner; seldom speaking, and then generally to condemn. The only person who knew her, and was not afraid of her, was her daughter; her son still retained some slight awe of her, but Emily was afraid of no one, and had too keen a perception of character not to be perfectly acquainted with her mother's foibles. No one but she could have gone on as she did now, inquiring, in defiance of Mrs Lawrance's condemnatory face, about subjects for which her mother could find no milder term than soul-destroying vanities. "Now come, William, put down that book; I want to talk to you. Do you still like the Bournemouths?"

"Yes."

"What are great people really like? Proud?"

"Yes, but too proud to show it in their manners. Lord Bournemouth has the most perfect manner I have ever seen—something you have no idea of. Lady Bournemouth is the finest of the family."

"What is Lady Geraldine like, now you know her better?"

"Very charming. I wish you knew her; you will never know what a real lady is unless you know her or some one like her."

"She would be too grand for me—make me feel small and shy."

"Grand? She has the simplest manners in the world. You have such foolish notions about great people. I tell you they are not half as proud in their manners as many of our own set. For insolence and exclusiveness, commend me to one or two of our friends I could name."

"Lady Hodgson to wit—whose husband is an ex-Lord Mayor! She gives herself such airs to me, though our father was much better born than any of her folks, as I had

a great mind to tell her the other day. Father was quite a real gentleman; was he not, mother?"

"As much a gentleman as any Lord in the country, though it is but a foolish matter to boast of. He was a truly spiritual, enlightened Christian—which is, I fear, of little value in your eyes," said Mrs Lawrance, scarcely looking up from her work.

"*Va pour les Chrétiens!*" was William's irreverent remark, made in a low tone, notwithstanding his mother's ignorance of French. "I am always glad my father was a gentleman. If we had only kept our original position in society!"

"Your father's, you mean," said Mrs Lawrance, coldly. "Mine is what it has always been. Your father thought it no shame to marry me, though I was of lower rank than he, and what the world would call a bad match. I fear his son has not the same indifference to the things of this life."

Mr Lawrance looked up, and seemed in doubt how to take his mother's observation, or what answer to make. Emily said quickly:

"Well—never mind. Tell me how Lady Geraldine dresses."

"Oh, very plainly. Something of cotton, I think, in the summer, and thick-looking stuffs in the winter, and a straw bonnet or hat. Her things always look fresh and new, but they are almost as plain as the poor people's."

"Law! I shouldn't like that," said Emily. "What is the good of being rich, if one doesn't have quantities of pretty gowns and everything one can possibly wish for? Does Lady Bournemouth dress as badly?"

"Never badly, but always very simply, unless there is something particular to dress for. The other night I happened to see her as she was starting for a party, and she was one blaze of diamonds, and her gown covered with flowers and things, but generally she is as plain as possible."

Mrs Lawrance looked up uneasily.

"Emily," she said, "is it absolutely necessary that you should be idle while you are talking? Cannot your hands be usefully employed even if your tongue is gossiping?"

"No, indeed, mother; I can never talk and work at once. And I have done quite enough for that stupid Dorcas Society. What the good of it is, I cant conceive, unless cackling, and tea drinking, and minister-worshiping are good. We could all work much better at home."

"I do not see that your conversation at home is more edifying than abroad. As to what you call cackling, I have never heard you try to introduce a more spiritual tone among your young friends, and until you have done that, and failed, you have no reason to complain."

And Mrs Lawrance gathered up her work and left the room.

"Emily, you have driven my mother away with your frivolity and heterodoxy," said William with a smile.

"Well, it doesn't matter," she replied, "she has given me up for lost long ago, and I really want to talk to you, which even I cant do comfortably before her."

"I should think not. How do you contrive to support existence here? One night

of it gives me the blues. You needn't expect to see me any more for the present; but when I can make up my mind to face it again, I will let you know."

"I suppose one cant ask you to come," said Emily, sighing, "and yet I wish you would, for, as you say, it is dreadfully dull. On one point I have quite made up my mind. If ever I marry, it shall be right out of this religious set. No minister for me."

"Does my mother still think of that man for you?"

"Oh yes, she is more set upon it than ever. He comes here every Sunday evening after meeting, and stays to supper. I cant think why she doesn't declare herself a Dissenter. All her feelings are with them."

"She will never leave the Church of England, because my father did not, and thank goodness for it," returned William. "Now mind, Emily, take my advice, and hold out. If you marry a minister, whoever he may be, I will never speak to you again. You will lose even the little standing we

now possess, and sink hopelessly down into their narrow-minded, ignorant, vulgar set."

Mr Lawrance spoke with unusual energy and excitement, and Emily hastily rejoined:

"Trust me for that. It would be out of the frying-pan into the fire. I wouldn't marry him if there wasn't another man in the world."

"You are quite right. I have no doubt, if you wait a year or two, you will marry well; and remember, Emily, it will depend on you and me to raise ourselves again to our original position. There is no reason why we should not take our place among the 'untitled aristocracy,' to which our family really belongs. Of course you can only do it through marriage."

"And you by preaching, or writing, or what?" said Emily. "Marriage also, perhaps?"

"As one means, of course. I shall have an eye to gaining a good standing ground."

"Have you any one in view? Do you still think of Amelia Hodgson?"

"Oh no—I have long ago given up all thoughts of her. It is astonishing how one raises one's standard as one's experience enlarges. Besides which, I should find it far easier to marry into a higher rank than into theirs. They expect money and a commercial standing; higher up, talent, and so forth, can be made to tell."

"And talent you certainly have," said Emily, thoughtfully. "And yet, there are a good many clever people in the world, and it must take a deal of talent to outweigh poverty, bad connection, and no birth to speak of."

"Certainly there were heroes before Agamemnon. But I doubt if there were heroes more resolved to succeed," said William, his keen face lighting up with a cool determined smile. "There is no end of men cleverer than I am, but there are not many who can turn their talents to better account. That only comes with an education like mine, and that is why I, and men like me, can cut out half the rich clever fellows in England."

"Matrimonially? But, joking apart, William, into what kind of family do you hope to marry?"

"The very best I can by any means achieve. I see a good many different shades of rank now."

"But though you see a good many people, you are in a hopelessly bad position for making any advances at present. Who would listen to a tutor's proposals? The only advantage you will get from your present position will be the doubtful chance of a living."

"I don't know that. When a man is domesticated in a house, it must be his own fault if he does not find opportunities of making play."

"But that could only apply to Lady Geraldine herself, as you say they never have young ladies staying in the house for more than a day or two together. William, you are never thinking of her? It would be madness—ruin. Once found out, you would lose your situation, and not only all

chance of a living from Lord Bournemouth, but even the Duke of Dorchester would feel himself absolved from his promise."

"You jump to conclusions too fast. Don't alarm yourself—how should I think of Lady Geraldine? As you say, it would be madness and ruin. Did you ever know me stake everything on one throw, and such a fool-hardy one?"

"No, I will do you the justice to say you are prudent enough in general. Still, if she is so beautiful and charming, you might be tempted to say something rash. Pray be on your guard, and if there is the slightest danger leave at once. Anything would be better than a crash with the Bournemouths."

"You haven't a bad head on your shoulders, Emily, when you choose to use it," was Mr Lawrance's answer. "Take care to keep it clear of fancies, that's all. I am going now, so you may wish my mother good-night for me. I dare say she is crying upstairs over our worldliness, and won't like to be interrupted. Before I go, I have one

piece of advice to give you. Do be particular about your dress, and take care not to wear more than two colours at a time."

"Not more than two colours?" said Emily. "That's a hint worth attending to. I'll see about that. Good-bye, and come again as soon as you can."

CHAPTER VIII.

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them all day long,
And make life, death, and that for ever,
One grand, sweet song.—C. KINGSLEY.

"EMILY was right enough in what she said about the Bournemouths," thought Mr Lawrance to himself, as he walked away, "it would be the deuce to pay if they suspected anything. But, after all, what is there to suspect? That I admire Geraldine? A man must be made of stone if he doesn't, when living in the same house with her. I think I have managed very well to keep so long out of love, though it is too expensive a luxury for me. I suppose in

a year or two she will be married to some great Lord, and then I don't care how soon I get a living, and look out for a wife. Let me see; there is no chance of Arthur's being sent to school for the next two years, as my Lady won't let him go before he is twelve, however forward he may be. If his remaining at home depended on his learning, or rather, want of it, I would very soon settle that matter. As it is, however, I have nothing to do but to work him up to be well placed at Eton; easy enough, fortunately, as he is a quick little fellow. I might be worse off, in many respects, certainly. Shocking place that home of mine is, to be sure. I wish Emily were well out of it, and if she made a good marriage, she might be able to help me; besides, her house would be a place for me to live at, if I wanted it. Her dress looked bad and shabby. I wonder if I could spare her five pounds to buy a few new things? No—better keep it—I am sure to want it some day, and it is my mother's business to dress her, after all. I'll just look what sort of things the girls who come to our

house wear, and let her know; a hint or two will be more useful to her than money without it."

And being much pleased with this prudent and economical resolution, Mr Lawrance went cheerfully home, complacently feeling that he had done his duty to his mother for a good month at least, and need not yet undergo again the penance of such an evening as the one he had just passed.

Geraldine came down the next morning very full of a letter she had received from Lord Lindon, and out of which she read extracts to Arthur during breakfast.

"My gracious," said Arthur, "what a jolly place to be at! Oh, shouldn't I like to drive a horse that could trot nineteen miles an hour! He should bring a pair back with him."

"Too expensive and troublesome," said Geraldine. "He says their riding horses are nothing extraordinary, so you and I, Arthur, had better stay in England."

"Does Lord Lindon mean to stay long in the United States?" inquired Mr Lawrance.

"No, he is going to Canada, and then means to finish with South America and the West Indies."

"He is very much to be envied."

"So I think," returned Geraldine; "if I were a man, I should like to travel everywhere."

"Hallo!" cried Arthur, who had been peeping over her shoulder, "here's a nice bit she has kept all to herself. Now listen, Miss Wood and Mr Lawrance. 'I haven't yet seen any girl as pretty as you, Cherry-blossom.'"

"Arthur! for shame!" exclaimed Geraldine, shutting up her letter. "You have no business to read out my letters."

"Oh, my goodness, how angry she is," said Arthur, delighted; "well, but he goes on to say he has seen some very pretty ones for all that. I dare say one of them will be Lady Lindon. How should you like that, Cherry? You would be cut out then; there would be a prettier Cherry-blossom than you in the world."

"He is quite welcome to marry them, as far as I am concerned, provided his wife

doesn't talk with a twang," returned Geraldine; "but I don't know what papa and mamma would say to it."

"Would they dislike it?" asked Mr Lawrance.

"Oh yes, I fancy so; they wouldn't like any one of whom they knew nothing; mamma has the very greatest objection to unequal marriages, and so, indeed, has papa."

"But it need not be unequal, my dear," said Miss Wood.

"Well, these people he describes don't seem very nice; and in any case, I think mamma has set her heart on his marrying into our own set. I should think it a pity myself, for those who live entirely in a set become so narrow and stupid, and it is so much pleasanter to know all classes and kinds of people; but mamma is very fastidious. She scarcely likes any one, even among those whom I should call ladylike."

"That is rather unfortunate, is it not?" said Mr Lawrance.

"What is unfortunate?" returned Geraldine, absently, still looking at her letter.

"To be so fastidious, since in this world she must mix with all classes and kinds of people, as you say."

"Oh I don't know—mamma is never obliged to see any one she doesn't like, and probably never will be. Some people like one thing, and some another. My taste is decidedly for variety."

"My dear Geraldine," said Miss Wood, "what can you know about it? Surely Lady Bournemouth is the best judge. And it will be so important for you, who have no sisters, to have a nice, pleasant, refined sister-in-law."

"Nice and pleasant, of course, and refined in mind; but as to refinement in manner, I think sometimes too much is sacrificed to it. I should not like a person who was vulgar, but as for little solecisms, I could very well put up with them, if they were accompanied by a superior mind and character. It is not very often that one finds strength and refinement combined; and, for my part, I like strength."

"Geraldine, I should be quite uneasy at your expressing yourself in this very decided manner if I did not know that it is chiefly

theory. When you came to try it in practice, I don't know any one who would be more fastidious than you."

"Well, we won't dispute about it; when Lady Lindon appears, we can decide the question. I suppose I must go to my lessons. Miss Wood, I wish you would excuse me these Kaisers. I cant remember them a bit, and if I could, what would be the good of it?"

"You will find the good some day, when you read more than you do at present. Fancy how helpless you would be, when reading some interesting work on History or Biography, if one of the Emperors was mentioned, and you did not know when he lived, or any of the leading events of his reign! I was quite shocked the other day to find that you scarcely knew anything more than the name of Charles the Fifth."

"I would compound for the helplessness, if I might give it up at present," returned Geraldine, as Miss Wood left the room. "Mr Lawrance, before you go, pray tell me when Henry the Fowler lived, and who was

his father? I have mislaid the book, and forgotten the whole thing."

Mr Lawrance promptly supplied the required information, and added, "If there is anything else you wish to know, Lady Geraldine, pray apply to me. I shall be delighted to assist you in any way."

"Oh, thank you; I should be delighted to apply to you, if Miss Wood did not object. She likes me to look it all up for myself. But I may fairly ask you about this, because I cant be expected to find it out for myself. What is the meaning of this Latin quotation?"

"A very simple one; I should almost have thought you might have made it out. 'I scorn to change or fear.'"

"That should never be my motto," said Geraldine; "I should never scorn to change, on due cause being shown; or to fear when there is good reason for it."

"True wisdom and true courage," said Mr Lawrance, "the only difficulty being to decide what are good reasons for changing or fearing."

Geraldine looked puzzled.

"I can fix on no general rules," said she; "beyond this, of course, that we must only fear what is wrong, and change when we are not right. And that would lead us to considering what is right and wrong, into which let us by no means inquire. I suppose we shall be able to settle each case as it rises. There are some mottoes I do particularly like—'*Nous maintiendrons*,' for instance; and better still, '*Noblesse oblige*.'"

"Do you translate 'noblesse' as 'nobility?'"

"In the widest sense of the term, as superiority of any kind; so that it be true superiority. I rather wish, after all, that I had learnt Latin. Do you know, mamma proposed a few months ago that I should learn it with you?"

"Did she? And why was it given up?"

"Papa and I both thought I had enough to do already. But I am almost sorry now. I dare say you would have taught me so well, that I should have learnt directly."

"I dare say you would have learnt directly; whether through my method of teaching, or your own aptitude, let us by no means inquire," he returned, smiling. "If ever Lady Bournemouth should wish it again, I am entirely at your service. Arthur's lessons do not nearly fill up my day."

"You are very kind—but it is an undertaking! And my German is still so bad. Bad as it is, however, I have there an advantage over you, for I don't believe that you know any."

"No, I don't. You will find it no difficult matter to get an advantage of that sort over me."

"Oh, I am not so sure of that; I always think you know everything."

Mr Lawrance's answering look, and shake of the head was a masterpiece, so completely did it express conscious worth disclaiming well-deserved tribute. "I am forgetting Arthur," he said. "His lessons will, very literally, not fill up my day at this rate. There is nothing else I can tell you?"

"A great deal that you might tell me, but

nothing that I should think fair to ask. By dinner time I dare say I shall have a question or two more."

But, notwithstanding this promising beginning, Mr Lawrance did not find he made as much progress with Geraldine in London as in the country. She was often with her cousin, and generally went to Gertrude, instead of letting Gertrude come to her, as she was only too glad of any excuse for going out. And Miss Ellison's manner was shy and cold, and Mr Lawrance could not feel at his ease before her. So he retired into the background, wisely feeling it better not to appear at all, than to appear at a disadvantage, and congratulating himself that Lord Lindon was not likely to return home for the present.

Geraldine disliked her stay in London as much, if not more, than usual. Before she had always had Lord Lindon as a resource in case of the worst; in the country Mr Lawrance had in some measure supplied his place. Now she had neither, and Lady Bournemouth was more than usually rigid

in keeping her daughter in the background, pending the important era of her "coming out." Right glad was she when the time for their departure arrived, and she joyfully thought to herself, that when next she came to London it would be to amuse herself, and not to be shut up all day with her books and her masters.

Lord Bournemouth, having been most thoroughly weary of his last solitary autumn in the country, announced his intention, happen what might, of asking at least one or two people to shoot his covers for him.

"Men will always come where there is good shooting and good wine, and that I can give them at any rate," he said to his wife. "I cant be bored as I was last year. So write to Fitzgermaine—and stay—yes, you can ask his brother Ernest, too; and the St Aubyns. Old St Aubyn is still the best shot I know; and if the young men do blow the birds about a little, he will make up for it. We must have some of the neighbours, I suppose, for I know they grumbled at our not having any of

them last year; and yet there is not a decent shot on our side of the country. If you can think of any one else, pray do."

"Certainly," said Lady Bournemouth. "As Lindon is not here to entertain the young men, it will be far easier and pleasanter to have as many as we can at once. But will there not be too many for the shooting? I know nothing about it, but I thought it did not answer to have too many—guns, I believe, is the expression—out at once?"

"Oh no; well, give them some battues, as I shan't be there myself; and then they can shoot each other, or the game as they please. And I was thinking that as Geraldine is to come out so soon, she had better take this opportunity of being a little more in the drawing-room. Her manners are rather abrupt."

"Well—yes; perhaps they are. It might not be a bad plan. And she can work all the harder when they are gone."

So the visitors were invited and duly accepted, with the exception of Lord Fitzgermaine,

who was going on the Continent, and then up the Nile. And Geraldine was duly brought down into the drawing-room at stated times, and rode and drove with the ladies at other stated times, and was petted and admired by them, as the only daughter in a house where there is a handsome eldest son is apt to be. The gentlemen admired her too; and, altogether, Lady Bournemouth was in a fever lest her freshness should wear off, and she become a conscious beauty before her time. She might have spared herself the trouble however; Geraldine, who had never been in so much society before, was mightily pleased and amused, observed everything and remembered everything, except this same admiration for herself, to which she remained, throughout, perfectly and innocently blind.

"Now, Miss Wood, please give me some tea! I am quite parched with thirst!" she exclaimed, entering the school-room in her riding habit, as Miss Wood prepared to make the tea.

This hour, and that of breakfast, were those

Geraldine liked the best, for then she told all she had been doing in the afternoon or evening, and discussed the company with Miss Wood, Mr Lawrance, and Arthur.

"I hope you have had a pleasant ride, my dear?" said Miss Wood.

"Oh very—at least it would have been, only when we came to Woodcote Lane, we found a locked gate, which proved an insuperable obstacle to Margaret St Aubyn. Lord Ernest offered to make such a gap in the hedge as should only leave her the least little bit to scramble through; or to turn her horse over for her; but she would neither go through the hedge nor dismount; so I was cheated of the gallop I had promised myself over the Common."

"Wasn't it a shame?" joined in Arthur.

"I told her Balnamoon would take the gate easily, if she preferred that, and she screamed, and said she was certain her neck would be broken amongst us! So Cherry, out of compassion, gave up persuading her, and we turned round, and went soberly back."

"Arabella would have jumped the gate without a word," said Geraldine, "I wish she had been with us instead of Margaret."

"So did not Lady Margaret, I dare say," was Arthur's reply. "She took good care to ride by Lord Ernest's side all through the lanes. You and I had to put up with old Mr Richardson, Cherry."

"And quite right too," returned Geraldine. "If I were nervous on horseback, I should certainly rather have Lord Ernest to take care of me than Mr Richardson. Otherwise I don't think she cares for him at all; in fact, I know she is disappointed not to find Lord Fitzgermaine here."

"Does she like him better than his brother?" inquired Mr Lawrance, who till now had not spoken, but sat balancing his spoon on the edge of his tea-cup.

"I suppose so. I don't know. By-the-by, you know Lord Fitzgermaine, for he is the young man whose life you saved! Which did you like the best?"

"I never saw Lord Ernest until yesterday, when I had ten minutes' conversation with him."

"And I never had more than ten minutes' conversation with Lord Fitzgermaine. Did you like him?"

"Why of course he did," said Arthur, "as he took the trouble of picking him out of the river."

"Goodness, Arthur!" exclaimed Geraldine, "do you think he could see any man drowning without trying to save him?"

"I hope my own private feelings had nothing to do with the matter," said Mr Lawrance. "Any passer-by who could swim would have done all I did for him. Yes, I liked him; though I don't think he was generally very popular at Oxford."

"To be clever, Lord Ernest is so stupid!"

"Is Lord Ernest stupid?" said Mr Lawrance. "Of course I am not a competent judge, but I should not have fancied him a naturally stupid man. Lord Fitzgermaine is more shrewd than clever; fairly well-informed, and very ready."

"That is exactly all Lord Ernest is not. I am sure I should like his brother the best; he would be so much easier to get on with. Miss

Wood, do you mind playing over that duet with me? I promised to play it with Arabella to-night, and I don't half know it."

"I wish you played as well as Lady Arabella, my dear," said Miss Wood, opening the piano.

"And Lord St Aubyn was saying last night he wished Arabella played as well as I do. He is a connoisseur, you know," said Geraldine, with a saucy shake of her head.

"Lord St Aubyn flatters you."

"There you just have it, Miss Wood," said Arthur. "My eye! doesn't he flatter her? I believe he means it all though, poor man."

Every one burst out laughing, and Mr Lawrance said, "I am sure Lord St Aubyn is much obliged to you, Arthur, and so, I dare say, is Lady Geraldine."

Geraldine turned round as she was sorting her music.

"Why should I be obliged?" she said, with proud simplicity. "It is nothing to me whether Lord St Aubyn means what he says or not."

Mr Lawrance saw he had involved him-

self in a dilemma by his officious remark, and did not see his way out of it. Fortunately Miss Wood began playing the bass of the duet; and Geraldine, without waiting for his answer, sat down to her own part. Mr Lawrance felt he was well out of his difficulty, and resolved to be more cautious in future.

CHAPTER IX.

High nature, amorous of the good,
But touch'd with no ascetic gloom,
And passion pure in snowy bloom,
Through all the years of April blood.

And manhood fused with female grace,
In such a sort that child would twine
A trustful hand unask'd in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face.

In Memoriam.

The St Aubyn party only stayed a few days at Avonbury—they had other and livelier places to visit; and one by one

the gentlemen dropped off, till at length Lord Ernest Fitzgermaine was the only one left. He lingered on indefinitely, for he was expecting daily to be summoned back to his regiment, and Avonbury was conveniently near the town where it was quartered. So he and old Mr Richardson, the Squire of the neighbouring parish, had the shooting to themselves, and did not enjoy it the less that there were no inferior shots to offend their workman-like taste.

Geraldine remembered the hint Mr Lawrance had given about Lord Ernest not being naturally stupid, as she remembered and reflected on all his opinions, whether relating to people or things, but do what she would, she found no reason to reverse her own judgment. After expending her best efforts, she could not make anything of him. Perhaps she was unskilful; perhaps there was really nothing to be made; however it might be, Lord Ernest remained always the same; the most ardent of sportsmen, the most chivalrous of gentlemen, the most silent of guests. She liked him well enough—especially when she saw how atten-

tive he was to her father, and how good-natured to Arthur. She admired his face, his riding, his shooting; but it was a relief to leave him, after attempting to entertain him for half an hour, and return to her school-room, Miss Wood, and perhaps Mr Lawrance. Sometimes, when she and her father were engaged in a discussion, he would look up with such quick intelligence, that she quite expected he would join in the conversation; but no—he remained silent, and if asked for his opinion, generally contrived to evade giving it. Once, on a racing day, she came down to play at billiards with him, and found him deeply engaged with a book, which, as he threw it down at her approach, she perceived to be a volume of Froissart.

"Do you like it?" she said, hoping to lead him gradually into a conversation.

"Yes, very much. This is your cue, I think, Lady Geraldine? What am I to give you?"

He gave her ten, beat her, and returned to his book for the rest of the day.

"Mr Lawrance," said Geraldine, "are you sure Lord Ernest is not stupid?"

"Not at all," he replied, with a start, and an assumed smile. "I wonder that you should remember my remark, though."

"Well, it was not my own opinion, which, I suppose, accounts for it. But he is so very, very silent."

"Many a man is that who is not stupid. I cant argue the question as applied to Lord Ernest, however, for I have really seen nothing of him. He is his father's favourite, I fancy, if that goes for anything."

"I wish Lord Fitzgermaine had come," said Geraldine. "I think I should have liked him."

Mr Lawrance became thoughtful.

"I doubt it," he said, shortly. "He cant ride as well as Lord Ernest, nor is he such a good shot, for I have often heard other men say so."

"Do you think I only value a man for his riding and shooting?" said Geraldine, drawing down her brows. "You must have a very low opinion of me!"

"Not necessarily. But I know you admire that sort of thing."

"I admire perfection of every kind, but I prefer perfection of the mind. I think you might have known that!" And she walked off, with a slight toss of her head.

Somehow her abruptness did not seem to offend Mr Lawrance; he merely smiled, looked after her for a second, took up a book, and began to read. Geraldine, in some displeasure at his low estimate of her judgment, would not return to the school-room after luncheon, because, as it was a half-holiday, she knew she should probably find Mr Lawrance there. Arthur, who never settled his afternoon's amusement without consulting his sister, after waiting vainly for her up-stairs, went down to the lawn, where Lord Ernest and Mr Richardson were arranging the details of their next day's sport.

"Have you seen Cherry?" he inquired; and was about to seek her elsewhere on receiving an answer in the negative, when Mr Lawrance crossed the grass not a hundred feet from them.

"Mr Lawrance! have you seen Geraldine?" was again Arthur's unsuccessful cry.

"That is the first time I ever heard you call Lady Geraldine by her long name," said Mr Richardson. "I didn't think you knew her as anything but Cherry-blossom."

"I never call her anything but Geraldine to strangers and servants," returned Arthur.

"You don't call Mr Lawrance a stranger, or yet a servant, Arthur?" said Lord Ernest quickly.

"Oh no! no! of course not; I only meant that I do know how to call her Geraldine sometimes."

"And why to Mr Lawrance?" said Lord Ernest.

Arthur looked up at him, and seeing encouragement to proceed in the curious and amused expression of his face, said, "I don't know—but there is a difference. I always call her Cherry-blossom to you, but Mr Lawrance isn't the same thing."

As Arthur said this, Geraldine appeared from the other side of the horse-chestnut, in the shade of which they were standing.

"Bless the boy!" said Mr Richardson, in a low voice, to Lord Ernest, "what fancies he

has! like any girl, upon my word! I'm sure the sooner he goes to school the better."

Lord Ernest slightly shook his head, but merely answered, "All boys are better at school to my mind."

Geraldine had heard what her brother said, and was greatly puzzled.

"What can he mean?" she thought, "or does he mean anything?"

Vainly racking her brains for an answer, she resolved to question Arthur himself.

"Well, you know Cherry, there *is* a difference," he said.

"But why? How do you mean? I see none."

"Look here. If you wanted a great favour done, would you rather go to Mr Lawrance, or to Lord Ernest?"

"Mr Lawrance—I know him the best."

"Oh, would you? Well then, I'd rather go to Lord Ernest any day."

"But why?"

"I know you think him a bore; but I think him very good-natured."

"Oh, so he is; I always say so, but so is Mr Lawrance, is he not?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so. But somehow—Lord Ernest is the best of the two, take my word for it, Cherry."

And this was the most satisfactory answer she could obtain from Arthur. A new light flashed upon her.

"Surely he doesn't mean that Mr Lawrance is less gentleman-like than Lord Ernest? It cant be that."

She determined to take her father's sense on the matter, her usual resource in a difficult case.

"Papa," she said, as she sat by his garden chair, an hour before dinner, "do you like Lord Ernest?"

"Like Ernest Fitzgermaine? Yes; why do you ask?"

"Don't you think him rather dull?"

"Heavy in hand, eh? Well, perhaps he is. But he is as good a young fellow as I know anywhere."

"Which is the nicest?—he or Lord Fitzgermaine?"

"I like him the best, and so does Dorchester. Younger brothers are generally worth two

of their elders. Don't make that an article of your creed though, puss; it's only fit for an old man like me."

"I cant yet, for I scarcely know any one except Lindon and Arthur. Now, is Lord Ernest what you call a thorough gentleman, papa?"

"Yes, every inch of him!" was the old lord's emphatic answer. "I don't know a better."

"In word, and deed, and thought?" said Geraldine earnestly.

"You romantic puss," laughed Lord Bournemouth. "Nothing less than a *preux chevalier, sans peur et sans reproche*, contents you. I should say he was."

"Isn't it a pity he doesn't talk more?"

"It greatly depends on what he has to say."

"Papa, is Mr Lawrance what you call a gentleman?"

"What is the meaning of that question, puss?" said Lord Bournemouth, looking up.

"I am enlarging my organs of comparison," returned Geraldine, with demure gravity.

"Oh, well, your opportunities are unfavourable for that amusement, I should say. I have scarcely seen him, but I fancy he is very fair for the sort of thing. His appearance is gentleman-like."

"Which is the most so—he, or Lord Ernest?"

"Ernest, without a minute's doubt. I wonder your organs of comparison haven't taught you that."

"That is what Arthur was thinking of," thought Geraldine to herself. "Papa," she continued, "if a person is clever and amusing, don't you think it makes up for their not being quite good style?"

"As an acquaintance you mean? Yes, of course I do. Rather a foolish question to ask, pussy. There is the dressing bell, and there is Ernest coming this way. I dare say he will be kind enough to wheel me in, so you needn't call the servants."

"Now I am glad I have settled this question," thought Geraldine. "Yes, Arthur is right, Mr Lawrance is not quite so gentleman-like as Lord Ernest; I see it all now, but then

papa agrees with me that that doesn't matter if a person is clever; and no one can be more fastidious than papa. No doubt Mr Lawrance is clever, and, in spite of all he says, I do think Lord Ernest stupid."

"That's a beautiful rose you are pulling to pieces, Lady Geraldine."

She looked up, and saw Lord Ernest standing beside her.

"There are plenty more as good in the garden," she replied. "Have you taken papa in?"

"Yes, and consigned him safely to the charge of Mr Harrison. Now pray don't destroy that flower, for I have taken rather a fancy to it."

"Have you? there it is for you then," she replied, pulling it off, and throwing it carelessly towards him. He took it, and when Geraldine looked at him five minutes afterwards, the rose was gone.

"Stupid man," she thought. "Why did he make such a fuss about it, if he has lost it so soon?"

Not so, Lord Ernest had not lost it, but had

very carefully put it into his pocket; that being his idea of a good place for a flower.

The next day the expected telegraphic message came, and he returned to his regiment. Geraldine was in the school-room when he left, but he charged Lady Bournemouth with his adieux, which she faithfully delivered.

"Well, I am not sorry he is gone," was Geraldine's only remark; "he bored me rather."

All through the autumn and winter they continued to have a few visitors at Avonbury. Lord Bournemouth had been amused by his daughter's observation about enlarging her organs of comparison, while, at the same time, it suggested a new idea to him. Geraldine could compare—she should have some material to work upon. It was perhaps unfortunate that among the very few young men asked, there did not happen to be one who, in power of conversation and variety of literary acquirement, was Mr Lawrance's equal, which naturally confirmed Geraldine in the belief that his talents were really of a very superior order. She would relate in the school-room all that passed in the drawing-room, the trifling inci-

dents, the conversation, the opinions broached, sometimes with clear and accurate mimicry, and then discuss them with Mr Lawrance, and learn his opinions, which, after a little turning and twisting, she generally made her own. Meanwhile, her manner became more formed, and her appearance more decidedly beautiful than ever; while her accomplishments, if not brilliant, at least promised to be satisfactory. Her father and mother were both pleased: it now and then occurred to Lord Bournemouth that Geraldine's ideas were not always such as he should expect from her character, but he reasoned fairly enough, that women always learn their opinions from books or people, and supposed she had been reading some book or other, from whence she had derived them.

There was a proposal once, from Lady Bournemouth, to send Arthur to Eton after this Christmas, but this, to her great surprise, was overruled by her husband. The fact was, Lord Bournemouth had observed with pleasure the very remarkable affection that subsisted between Geraldine and her brother.

He had once had a sister of whom he had been very fond, and who died young, and the memory of the love he bore her was still the freshest feeling left in his heart. To him it was beautiful and touching, this reproduction of the old days he remembered so well, and to this piece of unconfessed sentiment Geraldine owed his determination that she should not be separated from her brother till she had amusements and society to fill up the blank. He would not have owned it for the world, and merely remarked that Arthur was forward for his age, and Midsummer would be time enough.

The winter passed much as usual, excepting that Lord Bournemouth was remarkably free from gout; and that Geraldine's prospects of approaching emancipation were such a well-spring of hope to her that she cared very little for present dulness or restraint. That bright fairy land, London society, gilded everything by anticipation. She was really sorry to part with Miss Wood, of whom she was very fond, but the pleasure of "coming out" superseded all other considerations. That time was now

near at hand. Spring came quickly; Easter was late; so Lady Bournemouth decided upon going to London at least six weeks before it, that Geraldine might be properly dressed, and make acquaintances, before the regular crush of the season began.

CHAPTER X.

* * * What time and where
Did she pass that maid with her heavenly brow,
And her look so sweet, and her eyes so fair,
And her graceful step and her angel air.

THE BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.

"What is your fortune, my pretty maid,
With your sunny eyes and your golden hair?"
"My face is my fortune, kind sir," she said,
"The strawberry leaves make maidens fair."

OLD SONG.

That Slender, though well-landed, is our idiot.

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

IT is evening. There are lights in the streets, lights in the shops, lights in the squa-

lid abodes of poverty, vice, and crime. Lights in the citizens' houses, lights in the aristocratic precincts of Belgravia, and lights in Lord Bournemouth's splendid mansion, brilliant lights, for Lady Bournemouth is to give a great ball this evening. So says the "Morning Post," and so says the "Herald," and all the other papers which pretend to be well informed in such matters. And the invited, including a royal Duchess, prepare to go, and the uninvited are in wrath and despair, for this is to be the ball of the season, and every one with any pretensions to fashion and consequence is to be there. And there are lights in the room where Geraldine Vivian stands before the looking-glass, putting, with a beating heart, the last touches to her ball toilet. The happy time is come; Miss Wood has departed—not without many tears from Geraldine, and entreaties to come and see her often in London, and visit her at Avonbury. She has been presented, and is now in the midst of her first London season.

All her longing anticipations are realized, and life seemed to her one dream of de-

light. Flattered, caressed, and admired, her portrait is in every print shop, and her name is in every mouth, a proverb for beauty and grace. No more complaints of dulness are heard; parties, balls, concerts, operas, rides, drives, and a thousand other amusements and excitements, amply and charmingly fill up her time. All the day, and nearly all the night, is thus spent; till it seems a wonder that even her vigorous constitution and high spirits can stand the wear and tear. And Geraldine might have had other excitement too, had she so willed it. Many a girl would have found endless amusement in her many admirers; but Geraldine had no particle of the coquette in her, and though aware of the general admiration she excited, was strangely and completely unconscious of individual aspirants. There might have been no such things in the world as lovers for all she thought about them, and her surprise and incredulity, when rallied on her numerous conquests, were perfectly genuine and unaffected. So it happened that no one had,

as yet, made her an offer of marriage, and no one's name had been coupled with hers, even by the most gossiping. It was impossible to suppose any one the favoured individual, when all were treated with the same frank carelessness; it was still more impossible for any one to mistake her light, friendly gaiety, as meant to encourage intimacy. Lady Bournemouth, meanwhile, was not regardless of what she termed "dear Geraldine's future prospects." She could not disguise from herself that dear Geraldine's face must be her fortune; and very pretty as that face was, it was by no means impossible that, in this mercenary age, it might not prove fortune enough to secure her a brilliant marriage. There are so many pretty girls in London! She catalogued her daughter's charms with as business-like an eye as any auctioneer. Item — a good figure; ditto, red lips, blue eyes, golden curls, &c.—all this was very well for the present; but Geraldine might not be the fashion next year; some raven-haired, pale-complexioned young lady might bear off

the palm, and beautiful Geraldine sink into a star of the second magnitude. Such things had been; and Geraldine, as we know, had no striking accomplishments. Little Miss Young sang twice as well—Charlotte Treherne played fifty times better, and every one talked about Lady Margaret St Aubyn's drawings, while Geraldine's water-colour sketches made no effect at all. It would scarcely have increased her popularity could her acquaintances have seen the clever caricatures she executed of them, or heard the inimitable manner in which she mimicked them for her father's amusement; though in another rank of life either of those talents would have made her fortune. So Lady Bournemouth stood by, and saw her clever daughter eclipsed on all sides by the most ordinary young ladies, who had not one fifth of Geraldine's talent, but who far surpassed her in the art of showing off, and making the most of what they knew. It was mortifying enough — but what could she do! Altogether she would have been thankful to

have her daughter well established in life, young as she was; and it was with no small pleasure that she at length saw a person appear on the scene, who seemed exactly fitted for furthering her objects. A long minority had so increased Lord Silverton's great wealth, that he was one of the richest peers in England. Fairly good-looking, very silly, and very vain, he had been brought up to believe himself a person of the very greatest importance. Educated in the country, where

> "Not a Lord in all the country
> Was so great a Lord as he,"—

this idea was the natural consequence of the adulation and homage he received on all hands. It met with no check when he came to London, where the men toadied him, having heard that the shooting was excellent at Silverton Hall, and the cellar irreproachable; and the women flung themselves at his head in a barefaced manner, which even his vanity was forced to attribute more to his rank and rent-roll than to his personal charms and qualities. He

had good taste, this young lord, and was immediately struck by Geraldine's beauty, and still more by her manners, whose simplicity and unaffected grace he rightly thought better style and better breeding than all the *minauderies* and pretension of her companions and rivals. Lady Bournemouth's hawk eye perceived this preference at once, and quietly and warily she spread her toils, and prepared to take him in her net. Of course, he was invited to the ball, and great was her anxiety that Geraldine should look her very best; anxiety which was quite superfluous, as her daughter's taste was perfect, and no one could reproach her with indifference to the business of the toilet, even down to its minutest details.

"Ah, come here, child!" she cried, as Geraldine entered the boudoir, where her mother was reposing after the fatigues of dressing, "let me look at you. Well, that is very creditable — you really look extremely nice. But your hair—I wish you

would take more pains with it; your curls are far too smooth and straight."

"Now, mamma, leave me alone," said Geraldine, dancing off to the glass; "my curls are irreproachable, and why do you wish to alter them? It does not suit me to have my hair in a frizz."

"Leave her alone; the effect is perfect," said Lord Bournemouth, who, for the time, had established himself in his wife's boudoir, being too ill to appear in the ball-room, and being driven from all his usual haunts. Lady Bournemouth deferred to his opinion, on the ground that men always know best what men like, but shifted her plan of attack.

"Geraldine, I heard you singing atrociously to-day: with the opportunities you have had, it is really disgraceful. There is Miss Young, with not half your voice; who do you think would listen to you while she is in the room? The men rave about her."

Geraldine, who had not received a word

of blame since she left the school-room, and who expected to be applauded for the success of her toilet, turned sharply round, and seemed about to retort angrily; when, suddenly changing her intention, she flung up her head, and by way of reply made a *roulade* so clear and brilliant, and yet such a comically truthful caricature of Miss Young's peculiarities, that Lord Bournemouth burst out laughing, and even her mother could not repress a smile. It quickly vanished, however, and she resumed:

"That is all very well here, but would never do in the drawing-room, where I beg that you will not disclose your propensity to mimic, for nothing is more unpopular."

"Mina," said Lord Bournemouth, "your mother is right; if you can sing as well as Miss Young, why don't you do so?"

"Now, papa, this is too bad," said Geraldine, really distressed, "I thought you, at least, would take my part. It is all nonsense. I can't sing, I can only copy. I learnt that *roulade* from Miss Young, the

last time she was here; it is a very good one, and she made it often enough for me to remember it. You wouldn't like me to go through life copying Fanny Young, I hope?"

"Hush, Geraldine, there is no occasion for speaking so sharply," said her father. "I don't want you to copy anybody; only you know perfectly well that you could sing better if you choose. There, you have made your hair rough, and I hear a carriage at the door; pray smooth it before you go down."

"A carriage at the door!" said Geraldine; "and I promised Arthur to go and see him when I was dressed. Well, I must run down the back stairs, and will be up again before any one else comes."

She hurried into the adjoining dressing-room, passed a brush lightly over her hair, and running back again, opened a door in the boudoir which led down the back way.

"Geraldine!" exclaimed her mother, "do take care — you will tear your dress — do move more quietly." But Geraldine had

slammed the door behind her, and was dashing down-stairs as fast as she could.

"So tiresome!" she mentally exclaimed. "Mamma is just as bad as she used to be in my school-room days; nothing pleases her."

She opened the school-room door hastily, and was somewhat disconcerted to find Mr Lawrance there as well as Arthur—she did not wish him to think she had come to be admired.

"Mr Lawrance!" she said, "I—I thought you were up-stairs."

"So I should have been," he replied, readily, "but Arthur said you were coming down, and I thought I might as well benefit by the sight."

"I did not know you cared for this sort of thing," said Geraldine; "I thought all gentlemen despised dress."

"Not a bit of it, whatever they may pretend; it is only the details they cannot master; depend upon it, they are the best judges of the effect."

"It may be so," said Geraldine; "I know

one at all events who bears out your theory, and that is Lord Fitzgermaine. As he says himself, *il s' y connait.*"

"He does; he makes almost a ridiculous fuss about it. I remember when he saw a young lady, his first thought used to be, not whether her eyes were bright or her figure good, but whether her bonnet was the most fashionable shape, her gown the right colour, and whether her gloves fitted well."

"Mr Lawrance," said Geraldine, "do you remember when I said I should like to know Lord Fitzgermaine?"

"Perfectly. You said you thought you should like him better than Lord Ernest. I have always meant to ask you what you thought of him."

"You had better ask me," said Arthur, "I'm not a young lady, so he has no call to flatter me. I don't like him half as well as Lord Ernest. He never says a civil word to me; and I know he was in a great way the other morning when they were riding together, and Lord Ernest would come up to me and talk for ever so long. Besides, he can't ride a bit."

"Our old ground of difference," said Mr Lawrance, turning to Geraldine with a smile; "you were displeased with me once for saying you would not like Lord Fitzgermaine because he can't ride."

"With good reason! Besides, you were wrong, for I like him the best of the two."

Mr Lawrance became grave—not to say gloomy. "He is very fluent," he said, "which certainly Lord Ernest is not. But I am half inclined to agree with Arthur."

"But why? Undoubtedly he is the most agreeable of the two."

"I suppose so. But I should think Lord Ernest the most gentleman-like."

"There it is! Every one says Ernest Fitzgermaine is so gentleman-like! till I am quite tired of hearing it. What is the good of a man's being gentleman-like, if he is nothing in the world else?"

"It is always something," said Mr Lawrance, smiling. "But I dare say too much stress is laid upon it. To one in my position, however, perfect, unconscious courtesy must always be a most fascinating thing."

Geraldine flushed, as she always did when experiencing the uncomfortable sensation of being ashamed for some one else. She at once guessed, or fancied, that Mr Lawrance had not always received "perfect, unconscious courtesy" from Lord Fitzgermaine, and she very well knew that Lord Ernest could not be uncivil to any one. She said simply and gravely, "It is as fascinating to me as to any one, for whatever I may say, I don't easily forgive want of courtesy."

"I know that perfectly," he replied, "and I know very well that in this particular instance you will never see anything of it."

"I shall take precious good care to tell her of it, if I do," said Arthur; "for I don't half like him, and I don't choose, Cherry-blossom, that you should like people I don't."

"You tyrant!" laughed Geraldine. "When your school-boy friends come to Avonbury, I shall have to like them, I suppose."

"You won't be there; you'll be married before my first half is over."

"You are sound asleep and dreaming, that's very clear," retorted Geraldine. "Mr Law-

rance, I see you have this new poem every one is talking about," she continued, taking up a book from the table. "It is so tantalizing that I must not read it. Do you think it is good?"

"So good, that it is a thousand pities you can't read it; I am sure you would enjoy it, and yet there certainly are passages in it that you wouldn't like. It is a great pity, for they are not at all necessary to the story; mere blemishes in it, in fact."

"Then it is not the whole book that is bad? If those parts were left out, might I read the rest?"

"Yes, there is nothing in the rest to which the most fastidious need object."

"I wish you would do me a favour," said Geraldine; "and that is to read some of the good parts to me when you have time."

"I will read the whole book to you if you like. I shall have plenty of time, if you have."

"Oh, that will be delightful! We have not read a book together since I was in the school-room, and you translated part of the 'Iliad' to me. If I come to-morrow at one o'clock, shall

you be disengaged? But tell me whenever you are tired of it, or perhaps I shall come too often."

"That will suit me very well; I shall enjoy hearing your opinion of it, of all things. And pray don't think you can come too often, for nothing can give me so much pleasure as doing anything for you."

Something or another in his looks or words made Geraldine blush, and exclaim, "But I must not stay a minute longer. Mamma will wonder where I am, and I hear carriages coming as fast as they can. Arthur, my darling, good-night—you are really asleep now. Good-night, Mr Lawrance."

She half hesitated, then gave him her hand in her usual frank, careless manner, and left the room.

"She is charming certainly, wonderfully charming, and so beautiful and unspoilt!" thought the tutor. "So simple and unaffected too, just what she used to be in the school-room. No giggling and joking and nonsense, and no canting prudery, like the girls of our own set. I do like her clear grave eyes, and

her real hearty laugh when there is anything to laugh about. I wonder if she really admires that fellow Fitzgermaine? Anyhow, I rather think I have put a spoke in his wheel. She may like Lord Ernest as much as she pleases; he can't marry her."

He took up a pencil and book, and opening it at an evidently favourite passage, scored the verses—

"Not because thou art more fair
Than thy namesake of Ferrare;
Who, like thee, made love despair,
Eleanor.
Not because in those old days
Ne'er was known such theme for praise,
As thy grave and gentle ways,
Eleanor."

CHAPTER XI.

Knights were dancing by three and three,
There was revel, game, and play;
Lovely ladies, fair and free,
Dancing with them in rich array.—*True Thomas.*

And a fool
In every sense was he,
With scarce the wit to be a knave,
If born in low degree.—AYTOUN.

MEANWHILE the blush did not fade on Geraldine's cheek sooner than did the remembrance of what had caused it from her mind, and saying to herself, "How I shall enjoy reading with Mr Lawrance!" she ran up-stairs,

with a perfectly light heart, to find the rooms full, and the ball only waiting for her presence to begin.

"Geraldine," whispered her mother, "your thoughtlessness is inexcusable! What do you mean by keeping every one waiting in this manner?"

Geraldine only shrugged her shoulders impatiently, and took Lord Silverton's arm, who came up, and asked her to dance. He devoted all his little powers of making himself agreeable, and flattered himself that his courtship was progressing vastly well.

"Ah," he said, as a lady and gentleman passed them, "there goes Alfred Mowbray, and that singing girl—Brown—Jones—what do they call her?"

"It is Miss Young that you mean, I suppose," said Geraldine.

"Ah, Young—yes—that's her name, singing girl. Don't admire her style though; upon my honour now, I don't—too what you call screeching, you know."

"You surprise me," said Geraldine, "I

thought every one admired her singing; it is an undeniable fact."

"No, upon my honour, I don't. Don't like all that confounded Italian stuff — get that at the Opera, you know. You don't sing Italian, do you, Lady Geraldine?"

"No," replied Geraldine, "I can't. I wish I could."

"No, don't say so," returned her gallant admirer. "English is far better for English ladies. No need for them to sing like —what do you call 'em?—professionals, you know."

"Very true," said Geraldine, much bored, and suppressing a yawn with difficulty. "Lord Fitzgermaine, I see you are looking for me."

"I was," he returned. "This is our waltz, I think."

"You'll dance with me again, Lady Geraldine, won't you?" interposed Lord Silverton, as she was going away.

"I don't know," said Geraldine. "I am

engaged so very deep; but if I have a spare dance—"

"Ah—all right; yes—I'll come, you know."

"May that spare dance never arrive then!" said Geraldine to her partner.

"What! you don't like him? That's hard; for I suppose he can't help being a bore."

"No, it is not; for he is a greater bore than he has any right to be, and there are plenty of people who will find his ninety thousand a year, ninety thousand irresistible charms. Look at Margaret St Aubyn; she doesn't find him a bore, you may depend upon it. It is a pity he does not marry her."

"Marry her! He is after higher game."

"Who then?"

Lord Fitzgermaine looked at her in surprise. "Now," he thought, "are you the deepest of flirts, or are you really as innocent as you pretend to be?"

"You pretend ignorance?" he said. "When may I congratulate you?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Gerald-

ine in astonishment; then laughing, she said, "Not now, at all events, for it is just possible the spare dance may come off, in which case, formal condolences would be more appropriate."

"To whom are you engaged?"

"To everybody in the room almost."

"Then I don't see that you need be uneasy. By-the-by, before I forget it, let me ask you if Lawrance is still with your brother?"

"Yes, he is. Arthur will not go to school till Midsummer, and he stays till then."

"Ah, I must call upon him one of these days. Do you like him? But I dare say you see very little of him."

"Very little now, certainly; but when I was in the school-room he was often with us. Yes, I like him very much. What does that look mean? Don't you?"

"Oh, I—I am bound to like him; he saved my life."

"Yes, I know he did, and you ought to feel obliged to him," said Geraldine,

remembering the tone in which Mr Lawrance had spoken of Lord Fitzgermaine, and feeling rather amused.

She saw that for some reason they did not like one another, and wondered where the fault lay, though, of course, she was inclined to take Mr Lawrance's part. Nevertheless, Lord Fitzgermaine was so perfectly courteous to her, that she could not believe he could be different to any one else, and was disposed to think there must be some misunderstanding between them.

"So I am—only I had rather any one else had done it. There—I know all you can say about obligations and so forth; it doesn't alter the fact; I don't like him. But for that very reason I am enormously punctilious and polite to him; and, therefore, if you should chance to see me rapping at your door to-morrow, you will know that I am doing my possible to discharge the said obligation. I hope to do it more effectually one of these days, with a living."

"But why don't you like him? What do you know against him?"

"Nothing—not a single thing; and that is just where the gist of the matter lies. If there was anything against him, I might know it and forgive it; but it is impossible to forgive a man for doing nothing."

"Do you know, I think you are very queer?" said Geraldine. "I beg your pardon, but let me explain myself. Generally, if you ask a man what he thinks of another man, he says, 'Oh, he's a very good fellow,' or 'He's a brute,' and recognises no shades of difference between the two extremes. They leave all small perceptions to women, and then say we are ill-natured because we are fastidious. Now I see that you are like Lindon, who is the only other man I know who makes any distinctions, or is the least particular about shades of character."

"Without disputing your premises, I believe I am like Lindon in this respect; and if I remember right, he is much of my way of thinking in this case. But I should not leave you with such a groundless prejudice on your mind, and it is only

fair to Lawrance to say, that he was very well thought of at Oxford. Since then, of course, I have had no opportunity of hearing anything about him, except from you. But the music is stopping, more's the pity. I would ask you to stretch a point, and give me the next dance also, only I happen to know that you are engaged to Ernest, who would never allow it, even if you were so kindly disposed. And a quarrel between brothers for a quadrille with a young lady is not so well in real life as it sounds in novels. Well, it has saved me from a refusal, I don't doubt."

"I don't know that," said Geraldine, "you can reserve the experiment; it will keep."

"I shall consider that a promise; or is it merely another form of the German landlord's 'You may ask?'"

"A promise—if you like to take it so."

And she moved off with her new partner. As usual, she found him difficult to get on with, but the dance was short, and she had little time to feel wearied; besides, she

could talk to him of Avonbury, and that supplied conversation. Partner after partner succeeded; she had so many engagements that it was impossible to remember one half of them, and the evening was one long triumph. Here she was on her own peculiar ground, no one could compete with her, she distanced all rivals, and dazzled everyone by her beauty and spirit. Never had she been so gay and brilliant; she had a success that satisfied even Lady Bournemouth, whose proud, calm eyes followed her about, marking the sensation she created. Towards the end of the evening, she was standing by her mother, in the interval between two dances, waiting for her partner, when Lord Silverton, fancying her disengaged, claimed her hand, and reminded her of her promise. In vain she made her excuses, and assured him that she was really engaged; he had drank just enough champagne to make him extremely ill-tempered and obstinate, and insisted on his right with a warmth that at length attracted Lady Bournemouth's notice.

"What is it, Geraldine?" she said; and then seeing how the case stood, "Take a turn with Lord Silverton; Mr Mowbray is downstairs, getting his cousin's carriage; if he comes up before the dance is ended, I will explain, and send him to claim you."

Geraldine, extremely loath, was forced to comply, and set off with a good deal of ill temper. Not so Lord Silverton; he was pleased with himself for doing what he considered a very clever thing, and talked on, heedless of her short cold answers. He danced very badly, and took no pains to guide her clear of collisions; she was dashed violently against another couple, and, out of all patience, declined dancing any more, but proposed taking a turn through the Conservatory. There was no one there but themselves, and it was this auspicious time and place that Lord Silverton chose for making her a formal offer of marriage. Geraldine was extremely angry. "He must be out of his mind," she thought, "to propose after a week's acquaintance, and at a ball! What in the world should I do if any one came in?"

He was not out of his mind however, nor yet very drunk,—simply a very foolish young lord, with little sense of the fitness of things; and he persevered so pertinaciously, that it was impossible to evade the question. Geraldine, therefore, gave a decided refusal, well calculated to put an end to the matter at once, and expressing her astonishment at the extraordinary time he had chosen for his declaration, begged to hear no more about it. Lord Silverton fired up, and accused her of having given him encouragement; to which Geraldine, in great anger, replied that she should not defend herself from that charge, as he must be perfectly aware that it was not true; and, leaving him abruptly, went to seek her mother. On her way she met Mr Mowbray in search of her, and taking his arm she returned to the ball-room. Before the next dance was over, her displeasure had in some degree cooled down, and she looked on the matter as a ridiculous joke, little dreaming what very serious earnest it was about to prove to her.

The ball was over, the last guest departed,

and she rejoined her mother, who was sitting on a sofa in the inner room, a picture of weariness and exhaustion.

"It has gone off remarkably well," said Lady Bournemouth, as Geraldine approached; "and I never saw you looking better, especially towards the end of the evening, when your hair shook out a little. You are perfect now! Every one remarked it; there was not a girl in the room who could be compared with you."

"Oh, dear me! how very tired I am!" said Geraldine. "What I shall feel like to-morrow I can't conceive. Good night, mamma."

"To-morrow!" said Lady Bournemouth; "yes, you will look rather wretched, I am afraid. What do you think happened this evening? Lord Silverton asked if he could have a few words with me in private to-morrow, and from his manner there can be no doubt that it is a question of a proposal."

"When did he ask you that?" exclaimed Geraldine hastily.

"Just now, just before he left. Why, how red you have grown, child! What is the matter?"

"Now I call this shameful!" said Geraldine angrily, and flushing all over her beautiful face. "He proposed to me this very evening, and I refused him, and said I wished to hear no more about it, and now he is going to speak to you. It's too bad!" and she began rapidly walking up and down the room.

"Refused him! What is all this? What are you thinking of?" said Lady Bournemouth, in great astonishment. "Really you are very extraordinary. Pray be quiet, you drive me distracted; my nerves are quite unequal to these violent demonstrations."

But Geraldine took no heed, and continued pacing up and down. She did not for a moment doubt that she should be able to discard her troublesome suitor, but foresaw a great deal of worry and vexation from this measure, and thought he had taken a most ungenerous advantage.

"Geraldine, come here directly," said her mother. "Your behaviour is quite incomprehensible. Why do you put yourself into

such a fuss? and what do you mean by saying you have refused him?"

"That I don't like him, and don't mean to marry him," said Geraldine steadily, and stopping short in front of her mother.

"Well, really," said Lady Bournemouth, extremely angry, but half frightened at her daughter's determined aspect, "girls now-a-days behave in a very remarkable manner! Don't talk any more nonsense to me about not liking him. How should you, at seventeen, know what you like and what you don't?"

"I know pretty well what I don't like," said Geraldine, "and that's Lord Silverton. I know I am very young, and why need I marry at all now? I want to enjoy life for a year or two, and not tie myself down to any one."

"That is talking more sensibly," said her mother, who had half feared to discover some previous attachment; "and there can be no objection to putting off your marriage till you are eighteen, or even longer, perhaps."

"It would not be fair," said Geraldine

quietly, but very firmly, "for I never mean to marry him at all!"

"You are talking perfect nonsense," said Lady Bournemouth, quite as quietly; "of course you will marry him. And now go to bed, child; I am far too tired to talk any more on this subject, and really there is nothing further to be said."

Geraldine obeyed, with sundry uneasy misgivings on her mind, and an anxious longing to see her father, and prevail on him to take her part. And if she could have laid the case before him at that moment, it is probable that the result would have been very different, and this story would never have been written. But he was already in bed; and so Lady Bournemouth had the first word with him, and Geraldine's chance was gone. At first he was inclined to take her part, and to think that, with her youth and beauty, she might well afford to wait: besides, he was a clever man himself, and had no difficulty in understanding his daughter's distaste for Lord Silverton, whom he considered about the

greatest goose he had ever seen. But he was soon talked over by his wife, who represented that as Geraldine had certainly no previous attachment, she would, from her very youth, soon become accustomed to Lord Silverton, who, if a little silly, would be good-natured and complaisant, and allow his beautiful young wife to take pretty much her own way. To all this Lord Bournemouth deferred, knowing his daughter's decision of character well enough to imagine that, given the advantages of great beauty and fascination of manner, she would be able to obtain the upper hand in her future household. Feeling was not Lord Bournemouth's strong point; he was amiable but cold; and had himself married his wife without being the least in love with her. He had been very fairly happy, and saw no reason why Geraldine should not be the same. This being conceded, the advantages of the match were obvious. He was much better informed as to the state of his affairs than his wife thought, and was perfectly well aware that Gerald-

ine's fortune was small, and in case of his death—which might happen any day—she would be reduced to great poverty. It was as well to provide for her at once ; and so Lord Bournemouth composed himself to sleep again, in the cheering belief that Geraldine was about to be happily settled in life, and that, though she might cry a little, and make a fuss at first, when once married matters would arrange themselves, and everything go smoothly.

CHAPTER XII.

But her cheek was pale—
Sad was her smile at jest or tale;
And though she strove to bear her part,
She could not so devise
But that the anguish of her heart
Came glistening to her eyes.—AYTOUN.

GERALDINE awoke the next morning with an impression of something unpleasant hanging over her, and got up in perfect terror and wretchedness at what was about to happen, but firmly resolved to have her own

way. She would go to her father; surely he would be on her side, and see the whole case as she saw it. Though she repeated this over and over to herself, an uncomfortable misgiving lurked in her mind that he might not. Geraldine had not much perception of character, but if she understood any one it was her father. She had an instinctive consciousness of the coldness that lurked under his caressing manner, and did not love him the less for it; she well knew that when Lord Bournemouth had resolved on anything, no power on earth could shake him from it. He was rarely angry or vehement, but his uncompromising, gentle determination was a thing that could not be resisted; and once or twice she had experienced this. She was now to try how much her influence over him was really worth.

Lady Bournemouth knew she would do so, and wisely determined to say nothing to her until afterwards. She met her daughter with the usual amount of cold warmth, or

warm coldness, in her manner; remarked that she looked pale, that the air was close, and after luncheon they would drive into the country. About eleven o'clock she said:

"Now, my dear, I suppose you would like to go and talk to your father about your new prospects. You will find him ready to see and congratulate you."

Congratulate! the word was ominous, and for the first time Geraldine went with a beating heart to her father's room.

"I have been expecting you, my darling," he said, as she entered. "Well—you have my congratulations and very best wishes, if you are determined to run away from us, Puss."

"I don't want to run away at all, papa," she said, seating herself on a stool at his feet, and laying her cheek against his hand.

"Scarcely fair on the young gentleman, as there is no real reason for keeping you. We must not be selfish."

"Papa, dear," said Geraldine, raising herself up, and looking into his face, "I want to talk this seriously over. Indeed, I don't

want to marry Lord Silverton—I don't like him at all."

"Why not, my dear?"

"He is so silly!"

"*Eh—quand même?* He is no worse than half the young men in London. Depend upon it, he will make a very good husband."

"I shan't make a good wife."

"Make as good a wife as you have a daughter, and no man in the world would have a right to complain."

"Papa, if I am a good daughter to you, it is because I love you; I could not be a good wife to a man I did not love."

"My dear child, how are you to love him, if you don't live with him? How many girls do you suppose are in love before they marry? And yet most marriages are very fairly happy. Do you think I was in love with your mother, or she with me, before we married? Not a bit of it. But I would not, if I could, marry any one else now. So it will be with you;—the only difference being that Lord Silverton is extremely fond of you,—and, take my word

for it, Mina, there is nothing for winning love like that."

"If he were only a man I could respect, I should not so much care," said Geraldine, "though I don't know why I am to marry the first person who offers when I don't like him. But he is so foolish—so ignorant—so ungentleman-like; I believe he had taken too much when he proposed to me last night."

"Humph! that's against it," thought Lord Bournemouth, but he merely said, "Oh, nonsense, child, the nervousness of proposing flustered him a little, I don't doubt. I believe he is steady, as young men go, and that, let me tell you, is something. He is not bad-looking either, and his country-place is really beautiful, quite a fairy-land—the very thing you would enjoy. I knew it well in his father's time. In fact, it is in every respect a very good marriage for you."

"Oh, papa, I don't care about his looks, or his place, or anything. Oh, pray, let me wait. Perhaps I might have another offer; some one whom I could like a little better, and to whom you and mamma would not object."

"Mina, there is no one whom you like 'a little better,' is there?"

"Every one I know, almost; but not in that way. No, that is not my objection. I scarcely think there is another man you could name whom I would not try to like, if you wished it."

"Except the man I do ask you to like, against whom you can really urge nothing, but that at twenty-one he is not very wise. Perhaps he might make the same objection to his bride."

The tone was so unlike what Geraldine was accustomed to hear from her father, that she looked up in surprise. She determined to make one more effort, though she felt it was well-nigh hopeless.

"For God's sake, father, let me wait! I am wretched." She grasped his wrist with all the strength of her slight nervous fingers, and gazed at him as if she would tear an assent from him by the mere force of her energy. Lord Bournemouth gave no answering look. Nothing more calmly rigid than his white face, nothing more impassibly steady than his un-

moved voice as he replied, "I have already told you what I wish. Perhaps you will allow that I am a better judge of a young man than you. Be that as it may, Geraldine, both I and your mother think that Lord Silverton is in every way calculated to make you happy; and I expect you to receive him as your future husband when he comes this morning." Geraldine bowed her head down on the arm of his chair in a perfect storm of tears.

Lord Bournemouth leant back with a strong expression of relief. He felt he had managed the matter well and warily; no violence, no threats (nothing more foolish than threats with a high-spirited girl, he thought), no holding out of worldly advantages—that would never have answered, beyond the slight hint about the country place; nothing but the simple command, delivered as if disobedience was a clear impossibility. He watched her tears curiously—thankfully too, for tears are safe, and silence and quiescence sometimes very dangerous; was glad his part of stern father, which he had assumed rather against the grain, was over; and quietly waited for an opportu-

nity of speaking again, in a more natural tone. He stroked her curls once or twice, and after waiting some time longer, drew them aside. He could scarcely see her face, it was so sunk down, and buried in her hands.

"You will make yourself ill, Mina; pray control yourself. You are no longer a child; if you do feel unhappy at first, so does every girl who leaves a pleasant home. My dearest, you must know how it distresses me to see you so wretched!"

Geraldine looked up, and Lord Bournemouth felt startled for the first time when he saw the alteration those few minutes had made in her face. She was pale, and almost haggard, and the tears still ran quickly, though quietly, down her cheeks. She spoke steadily, and without any vexation; never in her life had she felt angry with her father: it was well that he, and not Lady Bournemouth, had re-opened the subject.

"I cannot help being wretched, father," she said. "I don't want to distress you. I suppose Lord Silverton will be here soon."

"I suppose so. If you are going, my darling, tell your mother to come here."

He had too much tact to call her by the usual pet name of "Pussy," or to ask her to kiss him, as he generally did.

Geraldine went to the drawing-room, where she found Lady Bournemouth.

"Papa wants you," was all she said.

"Oh, very well," returned Lady Bournemouth nervously. "If Lord Silverton calls while I am away, let him be shown up. He has been here already," she continued, "and I am quite satisfied with all he has said. Nothing could be more satisfactory. As to his affection for you, it does not admit of a doubt. I begged him to return in half an hour, when I promised that you should be ready to see him."

Geraldine's depressed assent convinced her that her husband had, as she would say herself, "acted quite wisely and firmly." She went to him, curious to know the result of the interview.

"I don't think you will have any difficulty

with her," he said; "but, upon my word, I was more than half inclined to give in. She was terribly cut up, poor child, and not without reason."

"My dear Frederick! what can be said against Lord Silverton? All the young ladies, except Geraldine, want to marry him. Good looks, splendid income, fine place — and, after all, he is very presentable."

"If you want to know what he is, he is simply the greatest ass in London, and that is saying a good deal," returned Lord Bournemouth, with the indescribable expression in his eyes and mouth, which still, after all her years of married life, his wife could not understand; "you and I need not make any illusions to ourselves upon that point. If it must be, Geraldine shall marry him; but I want to know if she may not be allowed to wait? She is sure to have other offers."

"But none so good. Besides, it is settled; probably Lord Silverton is here now."

"I could arrange that. And I should

be satisfied to see her Duchess of Dorchester. She would have Fitzgermaine."

"But would Lord Fitzgermaine have her? I am not so sure of it. If it were Lord Ernest—"

"Ah—Ernest. Yes, I am not romantic enough for that. Geraldine must not marry a younger son, with eight hundred a year. I wish to goodness Ernest were in Silverton's shoes."

"But I don't believe she would accept Lord Ernest. He bores her dreadfully."

"Well, that signifies nothing at present. Is there no one else likely to come forward if I give Silverton his *congé?*"

"No one nearly as good. She is so cold, she frightens the young men. I am sure I don't wonder at their not coming to the point."

"She thinks Silverton was drunk when he proposed. Probably that gave him courage. But how could you make such a blunder as to let him speak to her in that condition?"

"It was not my fault! I had no idea

he meant to speak so soon. I was completely taken by surprise. But even if he had taken a little too much, what young man does not? Scarcely any. And they make none the worse husbands for it."

"That's as it may be. However, if it is clearly settled that Geraldine is to marry him, I will do my part, as I have begun. Only I own I am sorry for her."

"My dear Frederick, do you think I would press it if I really thought she would be unhappy? I firmly believe she will settle down into his ways, or he into hers, and that they will agree extremely well."

"So be it then. I have said my say. If he is really here, perhaps you had better go and look after him. I dare say they will have come to the end of all they have to say to one another by this time."

Lady Bournemouth went accordingly, considering the hint not to be despised; but Lord Silverton had just left; and Geraldine, the picture of misery, was sitting with her head resting on her hands. From the position of the chairs, it was easy to see

that she had placed some considerable distance between herself and her lover. She had done her best, being determined, if possible, to like the man her father had chosen for her, but it was quite in vain. Lord Silverton's ideas on the subject of an interview with the lady of his love were limited to kissing;—this, of course, Geraldine was not disposed to permit. She had sat opposite him for fifteen minutes, during which time he had yawned three times, looked at his watch twice, and said, "Jolly ball last night—never enjoyed myself more. Remember the conservatory, Geraldine?"

The conservatory being in the back garden, Geraldine could not very well forget it; nor was she very likely to forget what had happened there. She was so startled at his calling her by her name for the first time, that in her nervousness she squeezed Charlie with her foot, and made him howl, which gave Lord Silverton an opening for remarking, "Very jolly little dog. King Charles, eh? Suppose you'll want to take him to my place with you?"

Mindful of her father's orders to receive Lord Silverton as her future husband, she replied:

"I could not be parted from Charlie. He has been my little pet for five years."

"Ah, yes—very well. Don't get another, though."

Geraldine reddened. This was rather strong for the first day; but she merely replied. "I should not care to have another."

"Ah—that's right," with an appearance of immense relief. "I don't like little dogs littering about. I mean to fit up a set of rooms for you, with everything any one can possibly think of; we needn't mind about the expense, you know; money's no object to me. But we mustn't have yelping little curs about the house; you shall have a big dog to live in a kennel, and go out walking with you when I can't," — Geraldine slightly shuddered,— "and I'll give you a horse. Ah, that reminds me—just you come to the window and look at my cab. What do you think of that, now? Isn't that a horse?"

"He is very handsome," said Geraldine. "I like his shoulders."

"Lord bless me, what an eye you've got! His shoulders — yes, to be sure — that's his best point. I say, Geraldine, do you think your mother would let me take you out for a drive? You could get on your bonnet in a minute, I suppose."

"Oh no!" exclaimed poor Geraldine; "she would not hear of it."

"Where is she? I'll ask her."

"Oh, but you can't see her—she is with my father—they are talking of business," urged Geraldine, who in her extremity felt ready to say she did not possess a bonnet in the world, or anything else that might free her from the proposed infliction.

"Settlements, eh? I tell you what, Geraldine, I shan't be a screw about all that, but I know old Bournemouth's a sharp hand, —at least, so they tell me; so I shall have nothing to say to him. My man of business shall settle it with his."

"This is a very strange way of talking

of my father, Lord Silverton," said Geraldine, in great displeasure.

"Oh, come — you mustn't be angry—I meant nothing by it—only a way of talking, you know. But I say—you mustn't call me Lord Silverton, but Silverton, as my sister does. I must bring her to see you, by the by; she's very slow, and not a beauty, like you. All the better, isn't it? there won't be jealousy between you, eh? Sisters-in-law are always like cat and dog."

"I think I have had the pleasure of meeting Lady Sophia," said Geraldine, as a vision of a tall, awkward, and very silent girl rose up before her. "She seems very quiet."

"Oh, yes—all the better that. Women should always hold their tongues—they do no good with their confounded cackle. Don't mean that for you, you know; you can't talk too much to please me."

"Thank you," said Geraldine, with a twinkle in her eyes; for not even the seri-

ousness of her position could extinguish her natural sense of the ridiculous.

"Well, then, if you won't come with me, I must go, I suppose. Shall you be at home this afternoon?"

"Oh no—we are going into the country—I don't know where, but miles away," said Geraldine, in great haste.

"Oh, that's a bore; however, I'll come again to-morrow. I say—wont you give me a kiss?"

"No," said Geraldine, and deliberately set her foot on Charlie's tail, who thereupon made such a fearful barking, howling, and yelping, that Lord Silverton departed in dismay.

It was after this peculiarly satisfactory *tête-à-tête* that Lady Bournemouth found her daughter as described. Can it be wondered at if she looked wretched? Lady Bournemouth hesitated a little—she scarcely knew what to say. At last she seated herself beside Geraldine, and, taking her hand, gently drew her towards her, and kissed her forehead.

"My dearest child," she said, "you see your father agrees with me. Are you not satisfied to abide by our united judgment?"

"Oh, mother!" said Geraldine, "indeed I cannot! If you had been here ten minutes ago, I don't think even you would wish me to marry him."

"I dare say he is not very bright; but, Geraldine, it is not always the cleverest men who make the kindest husbands."

"But, mamma, he is worse than stupid —he is so unlike a gentleman—so unlike everything I have ever seen; I should be ashamed to come into a room with him."

"My dear, no one else sees him in the same—I must say, exaggerated—light that you do. Most people think him pleasing."

"But I don't. It is a penance to me to be in the same room with him; what would it be when he belonged to me?"

"Geraldine, remember it is your future husband of whom you are speaking."

"Indeed it is not," said Geraldine, "for I cannot and will not marry him. I wish with all my heart I could obey you; but it would

not be right where the happiness of my whole life depends upon it."

"It is no use telling this to me. You must settle it with your father," returned Lady Bournemouth, risin in grave displeasure. "He led me to expect that I should find you in a more dutiful frame of mind. But his wishes appear to have as little weight as mine, notwithstanding your protestations of affection."

She left the room, and Geraldine, unheeding the last part of the remark, sat revolving in her mind what further arguments she could use with her father. There was but one that was valid to her—the more she saw Lord Silverton, the less she liked him; but whether it would seem equally so to Lord Bournemouth might, after her morning's experience, well be doubted. While she was still considering the question, the clock, striking one, reminded her of her promise to Mr Lawrance.

"I will go down," she thought, "or he will guess that something has gone wrong."

She washed her eyes, smoothed her hair, and taking up her work-box, went down-stairs.

CHAPTER XIII.

XL.

"Ah! Lady deare," quothe then the gentle Knight,
"Well may I ween your grief is wondrous greate,
For wondrous great griefe groweth in my spright,
Whiles thus I hear you of your sorrows treate.
But, woefull Lady, let me you entreate
For to unfold the anguish of your hart:
Mishaps are minstred by advice discrete,
And counsell mitigates the greatest smart; [part."
Found never help, who never would his hurts im-

XLI.

"O! but," quothe she, "greate griefe will not be toulde,
And can more easily be thought than said."
"Right so," quoth he, "but he that never would
Could never: will to might gives greatest aid."

THE FAERIE QUEENE.

"How punctual you are!" he exclaimed as she entered.

"I am not less so, I hope, for I have the book here, with the parts all ready marked out. You will enjoy this opening scene."

Geraldine silently drew a chair to the table, and began her work. The poem was, as Mr Lawrance had said, beautiful, and at any other time she would have enjoyed it of all things, but now she seemed utterly incapable of fixing her thoughts. He noticed her abstracted air, and stopped.

"I am afraid I read it very badly," he said, half vexed; "for I cannot believe, if you read this to yourself; your thoughts would wander."

She started and answered hastily, "Oh no! you read beautifully. I like it very much. Pray go on; I am rather tired this morning, and that makes it difficult to keep my mind steadily to it. Give me another trial, and I will be more attentive."

He went on for a short time, and by exercising great determination she succeeded in restraining her wandering thoughts. She had better have let them wander, however; for on coming to a very touching passage, which seemed applicable to herself, she put down

her work, and after one or two attempts to control herself, fairly burst into tears.

"My dear Lady Geraldine!" exclaimed Mr Lawrance, who till this consummation had prudently ignored her pale cheeks and red eyes. She put her two hands on the table, and laying her head upon them sobbed as though her heart would break. Mr Lawrance was extremely puzzled.

"I am afraid you have had something to distress you," he said gently; "no bad news, I trust?"

"No, oh no,—to no one but me, that is."

"It cannot be bad news to you, and good news to your family," said Mr Lawrance, after a few moments' hesitation.

"Yes, it is," replied Geraldine; "they do not care. Oh! if Lindon were here!"

He was silent; for he feared on the one hand to appear unfeeling, and on the other to be presuming, but on reflection felt convinced that, after what she had said, he might continue the subject.

"Can you not write to Lord Lindon?" he asked.

"It would be too late," she sobbed out, "I could not get his answer for five or six weeks, and I see plainly that I shall be married by then."

"Married!"

Geraldine started at the word. "Oh, what have I said? Oh, I ought never to have spoken of it! Pray forget that I said anything about it."

"Forget it I cannot," he returned, "but I will never recall the subject if you do not like it. Shall I go?"

"No, it is too bad to drive you from your own room. I beg your pardon for being so foolish, but I am so tired! I will come again; not to-morrow, for I shall be out all the morning—but the next day, if you don't mind trying again, I hope I shall listen better."

She had dried her eyes, and, by a strong effort, recovered her composure in a great degree, and was now determined to treat her tears as a mere bodily weakness, brought on by over-fatigue and excitement.

"I am not fit for London, if a ball upsets me so much," she said with a smile; "good bye, Mr Lawrance, and thank you."

"Or an offer," thought Mr Lawrance, "I wonder from whom?"

It was easy to find out, for the next day Lord Silverton came to luncheon, and Geraldine's manner was, in its way, as unmistakeable as her mother's. Mr Lawrance had no difficulty in ascertaining exactly how the case stood, and, somewhat to his surprise, found himself taking rather more than an interest in the affair. He was so perturbed as to be under the necessity of communicating his sentiments to some one else, and took the unusual step of going to his mother's house, with a view to giving Emily part of his confidence, which he certainly would not have done had he had any one else with whom to consult. But he had studiously dropped all his friends in his own station; and those of a higher rank were merely acquaintances—besides, this was not a matter to confide to them.

Emily was alone in the little sitting-room when he reached Mrs Lawrance's house, and to his great pleasure he found his mother had gone out to a Missionary meeting; Emily, who had a head-ache, having declined to accompany her.

"That's lucky," he observed. "Really quite a rare piece of luck. Now look here, Emmy, your head's not so bad but what you can talk to me?"

"Oh no, not at all. Well, have you any news?"

"There's one piece of news at our place;—Geraldine is going to be married."

"Who to? No one I should know about, I suppose?"

"To the Earl of Silverton—an immense income, I believe, and a very fine place."

"Dear me! how nice for her! What will her wedding dress be?"

"Wedding fiddlesticks! just like you women! Nice indeed! She doesn't think it so, I can tell you."

"What does she want then? A Marquis or Duke?"

"A man, I imagine; instead of a snobbish, ignorant puppy, as this fellow is. Marry her to him!—

"As the husband is, the wife is,
Thou art mated to a clown,
And the grossness of his nature
Shall have weight to drag thee down."

"For goodness sake, don't quote poetry in that dreadful fierce tone! What do you mean? Why is she to marry him if she doesn't like him?"

"Because her father and mother insist upon it. He is a great catch—not to be thrown away, though he is an idiot, and a vulgar one."

"Vulgar? but he is an Earl!"

"Earls can be vulgar as well as other people; and idiots too, Heaven knows. What she will do, I can't tell, but I don't think she will make up her mind to marry him without a fight for it."

"What can she do? Won't her brother help her?"

"He is in America—no one exactly knows where at present. The chances of a letter reaching him in time are a great deal more than doubtful, and then he is laziness itself. I fancy she has written to him, but I don't expect much result. The most he would do would be to write, probably; and he might as well write to the winds as to Lord and Lady Bournemouth on this subject."

"Then what can she do?"

"Marry some one else."

"But has any one proposed?"

"For that matter, there are always men ready to propose to a girl like her."

"But would her father and mother let her marry any one else?"

"Not unless he were a better, or at least as good a match as Lord Silverton."

"Then what do you mean?"

"Perhaps she might not ask them."

"Oh," said Emily, who thought she began to perceive what her brother meant.

She sat very silent for some time, a curious considering expression coming into her brown eyes, and then said: "You take a great interest in all this, William!"

"Who could help it? A lovely, charming creature like her to be sacrificed—sold—to a clod, and worse than a clod!"

"She must be very— charming, as you say."

"Charming! this— but there; it's no use trying to say what she is. There is more fascination in her little finger than in all the other women I've ever seen put together."

"You once gave me to understand that you were not in love with her, William. I don't think you could say as much now?"

"I don't pretend to say it. I'm over head and ears in love with her, and there's no use in denying it," was the moody answer.

"But what can come of it? Nothing but disappointment. It sounds hard to say so; but the sooner you get over the feeling the better."

"It's too late for that. I could no more leave off loving her than I could live without breathing. I love her hair, her eyes, her lips, even her very dress. And this is not the moment to think of giving it up."

"Why not?" said Emily, watching his face intently.

"Because— I can't see what will be the end of it."

"Of her engagement, I suppose you mean? William, I am afraid you are thinking of doing something very rash."

"And what may that be, pray?"

"I am afraid—surely you would never think of telling her how much you feel for her?"

"That would depend on circumstances."

"But, William, for Heaven's sake, think what you are doing! Surely you are not decided upon it? You do not know if she has any feeling for you."

"I could make certain of that before I attempted anything. But make your mind easy, I have decided on nothing. As to her marrying me, it is out of the question; but if I can compass it, she shall marry no one else."

"Rather hard on her," said Emily, with a slight smile, which she did not dare show. "Besides, how could you prevent it?"

"It may be hard on her, and if so, so much the worse; but come what may, I cannot see her the wife of another man. I have already very effectually stopped a budding liking for a young lord with a head on his shoulders and a tongue in his head; it will go hard if I can't prevent her marriage with this booby."

"But how can you? This is quite absurd."

"Not so absurd as you think. I have plenty of opportunities of seeing her alone, and we are on intimate terms; I can easily suggest methods of rebellion."

"Take care what you are about. It's ill

playing with edge tools. If she does not respond—if you are discovered."

"The game is up, of course. I go in for all the risks."

"I wish I could persuade you; I wish you would take my advice, it would be so much better to give it up."

"Give it up? Not for the world."

"At least promise me that you will be prudent; I wish you would promise me decidedly not to speak to her."

"I will promise you one thing; if I have a fair chance, to make a fair use of it."

"William, you distract me! I shan't know a moment's peace; I shall expect every day to see you come here, having been turned off by Lord Bournemouth."

"I wish I hadn't told you, then."

"No! no! I am glad you have. You must promise to tell me everything — everything. Promise."

William hesitated. "I can't; for I don't know when I shall be able to come again; and I never trust this sort of thing to paper. No, you must be content with what I can let you

know from time to time. It won't be long, I imagine. They will be anxious to settle the marriage as soon as possible."

"William, did you not say she has an uncle? Can't he interfere?"

"Not to any effect. Lady Bournemouth will make out a plausible case; and, after all, he has no legal right. No, we must cut out our own path, fight our own battles; Geraldine scarcely guesses, I think, how identical our paths are."

"Then let her remain ignorant."

"Nonsense! Come, Emmy, you have said enough. I am not a baby or a fool, and can take care of myself. Was there ever anything so fortunate as my mother's being out of the way to-night? Now, mind you hold your tongue about all this; or never a word more will I tell you. Good bye. Take care of yourself, and get rid of your headache."

In about ten minutes after he had left, Mrs Lawrance came in.

"Emily," she said, in her grave, deliberate voice, "I would you had been with us. It was a most blessed meeting. We were, in-

deed, highly privileged. That man of God, good Mr Barton, held forth in prayer for more than an hour; and then we had a most lucid exposition of a portion of Scripture from Mr Josias Jones."

She took off her bonnet, seated herself, and continued meditatively: "Poor human reason and human wit! A perishing matter indeed, and yet it may be made subservient to the spiritual interests of the soul. At least, so I gather from the Book, though many professing Christians think otherwise. Rarely have I heard so clear an argument as was Mr Jones' to-night. And yet, after all, what is argument? What signifies the head compared to the heart?"

Be it observed that there were few people keener in detecting a flaw in an argument than Mrs Lawrance, that she knew, and was proud of her logical acuteness, and that she generally prefaced a display of it with some such depreciatory remark as the above. Emily knew what was coming, and having no taste for polemics, interposed.

"I dare say you enjoyed it, mother; but,

after all, I am not sorry I staid at home. William has been here, and he would have been disappointed at finding us both out after coming so far."

"Has he? I am sorry to have missed him. If he had come an hour earlier he might have gone with me, and we could have conversed by the way."

Emily slightly raised her eye-brows and shook her head, but said nothing.

"Did he say anything of himself? I suppose everything is much as usual with him?"

"Yes;—but they are going to have a wedding at Lord Bournemouth's. Lady Geraldine is going to be married."

"Indeed! Poor young thing—no doubt she is wholly given up to the pleasures of her new clothes and finery. Did William say anything of the character of her future husband?"

"He is the Earl of Silverton. William did not seem to think very highly of him, and hinted that Geraldine does not either. It is her father and mother's doing."

"Sad indeed! Poor thing! But, Emily, I must give you an outline of Mr Jones' dis-

course. And the Missionary—a most comfortable man, and a true Christian—gave me this tract. It contains an account of his labours among those poor benighted savages, and is deeply interesting."

"My dear mother, my head is so bad, I can think of nothing. I am going to bed; but to-morrow, when we are at work, I shall be delighted to hear all about it."

"Now," she thought, as she went up-stairs, "mother would take that as a special indication of the will of Providence. I had meant to give her a cautious hint as to William's feelings, but she wouldn't hear me. Well, Providence or no Providence, I have no doubt it is better as it is. I shall keep it all to myself now."

CHAPTER XIV.

If consequence do but approve my dream,
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

SHAKSPEARE.

DAY by day Geraldine became more depressed and careworn. She had made another appeal to her father, and had been silenced so decidedly that even she did not venture to renew the subject. Lady Bournemouth's manner was unusually sweet and caressing, but so cold and reserved as to leave not the slightest ground for hope. They seldom went out in the evening, and when

they did, she found that every one considered her the future Lady Silverton. In spite of her indignant protests, everything she did or left undone was construed into a tacit consent to her engagement. No answer from Lord Lindon could as yet be looked for; and Lady Bournemouth contrived to keep her mornings so entirely employed in the arrangements for the *trousseau*, and her afternoons so filled with occupations of various kinds, that she had no time for seeing either her uncle, aunt, or Gertrude alone. She wrote to Sir William, detailing the whole case, and imploring his protection; but, as Mr Lawrance had said, beyond remonstrating, it was out of his power to interfere. Remonstrances were not wanting, both from him and Lady Ellison, but to no effect; Lord Bournemouth, in his politely frigid manner, effectually dismissed the subject as far as he was concerned; and Lady Bournemouth assured them in her softest tones, that though dear Geraldine was not—what should she say?—so much in love with Lord Silverton as some young ladies were with their *fiancés*, yet that was scarcely to be expected or lament-

ed, as she was not a girl to have a "*grande* passion," and Lord Silverton was so amiable, and so truly and fondly attached to her, that, once married, he could not fail to make her happy. After this, nothing more could be said; Geraldine was fairly caught in the toils, and must be strong and dexterous indeed to escape. She was in a thoroughly false position, and more seriously compromised every day.

Her only friend was Arthur, who, of course, took his sister's side, hated Lord Silverton with all the energy of a thorough-going partizan, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to treat him with civility. It was rather a curious instance of his instinctive distrust of Mr Lawrance as regarded Geraldine, that while he talked freely on every other subject to him, he never mentioned her, though she was certainly the person uppermost in his thoughts.

Meanwhile her readings with Mr Lawrance continued; and after a time it came to be tacitly understood between them, though neither alluded to the subject, that it was

her approaching marriage with Lold Silverton that had caused her distress on the first occasion.

"There is Lord Silverton's cab at the door! I suppose I must go," was the manner in which she broke the ice. "I don't think I will though—he will keep me all the morning."

"I heard him yesterday at luncheon make an appointment with Lord Fitzgermaine for two o'clock, so, if you take my advice, you will go," said Mr Lawrance, frightened lest she should refuse, and Lady Bournemouth should lay the blame on him.

"It is very well for you to say go," exclaimed Geraldine, "but you do not know how I hate it! No one does—no one cares for me."

"I do," said Mr Lawrance; "no one more, or half so much. Had I my will, you should never do a thing you disliked."

"What difference does it make to you?" exclaimed Geraldine, bitterly, yet catching at his words.

"Every difference. I do not wish to see you — as I have seen you," he said in a cooler tone, and looking up carelessly.

Geraldine said quietly, "I suppose you are right; I had better go," and went, without another word.

"What does he mean?" she thought. "'No one more, or half so much?' I know he admires me, and does all he can to please me, but so do most people, and yet they don't talk to me in that earnest sort of tone, or in those words. But then he seemed to draw back;—after all, I dare say he meant nothing by it. I wish he hadn't alluded to that day when I was so silly."

And with that she went up-stairs, and sat in the drawing-room for half an hour, enduring in cold silence Lord Silverton's attempts to make himself agreeable.

"I say, Geraldine," he remarked, towards the end of the visit, "we must be thinking of settling the day for our wedding, you know."

"You must ask my mother," she returned; "it is her affair, not mine."

"Oh, come, that's too bad; it's not Lady Bournemouth that I'm going to marry."

"It is Lady Bournemouth who accepted you, as you very well know; and I must refer you to her to settle all details."

"Very well; you promise to agree if she does settle it?" said Lord Silverton, rising to take leave.

"I must," was the encouraging answer.

Five minutes afterwards, Geraldine rushed past Mr Lawrance, as he came upstairs, with a pale and wrathful face, and Lord Silverton's cab drove away from the door.

The next day there was the same inattention that had characterized the first reading, and this time Mr Lawrance was at no loss to account for it. The poem turned upon the subject of a girl, who, being required to marry a man she did not like, refused to do so, and carried her point, in spite of the wishes of her father and mother.

Geraldine seemed to wake up as this was read.

"People may write poetry if they like," she said; "but they know nothing about it."

"I have not thought this book unnatural hitherto," said Mr Lawrance.

"It is now," said Geraldine. "A girl can't help marrying, if her father and mother insist upon it."

"I think there are always ways—though not always pleasant or easy ones," returned Mr Lawrance very quietly.

"I wish I knew them!" exclaimed Geraldine. "I should not mind their being difficult or disagreeable. Tell me how you mean."

"I can't do that," returned Mr Lawrance, "every one must act and plan for himself—if indeed acting and planning be desirable."

This hint worked and fermented in Geraldine's mind. "What can he mean? How can I refuse? I am sure I have done all I can; and if Lord Silverton had a spark of love for me, or respect for him-

self, he would have broken off our engagement yesterday. I have heard of people, in cases like mine, marrying some one else—can he mean that? But whom could I marry? No gentleman would propose to me now it is so well known that I am engaged to Lord Silverton, or I am sure I would accept him at once, if I didn't positively dislike him."

"Geraldine," said her mother's voice at her elbow, "come here; I have something to say to you." Geraldine obeyed, and Lady Bournemouth continued: "Lord Silverton has asked me to fix the day for your marriage. He says you referred him to me. I will not remark now on the singularity of your manner to him; for that is more his affair than mine, and he appears to be satisfied; but I wish to inform you that I named this day fortnight. Your *trousseau* will be quite ready by that time."

Geraldine grew deadly pale. "Oh, mamma, must it be so soon?"

"Yes," said Lady Bournemouth. "I do not see that there is any good in waiting.

You will get on much more comfortably with him after you are married. You know, my dear child, I only wish to promote your happiness—and I assure you that when I was married to your father, I was never so thankful in my life as when it was fairly over."

"Happiness!" exclaimed Geraldine, "if you wish for my happiness, you will let me dismiss him."

"Dismiss him! and after it has gone so far! Your *trousseau* nearly ready, many of your presents arrived. You would be disgraced for life."

"Not so much as I shall be when I promise to love, honour, and obey a man whom I hate and despise."

"Don't use such strong language, Geraldine, it is unlady-like and unnecessary. I tell you again, you will get on very well when once you are married. You had better write to Gertrude, and tell her this day fortnight is fixed."

And Lady Bournemouth swept out of the room, leaving Geraldine half stupified with

fear and horror. Notwithstanding all she had suffered, till this minute she had never seemed to realize the full misery of her position. Mr Lawrance's words recurred to her mind, and she turned them over and over, considering what meaning could possibly be attached to them. "Means—and yet not pleasant or easy ones? Should she try to disgust Lord Silverton so much with her coldness as to force him to break off the engagement himself? She had tried that already without success; and had she succeeded, she could not think it an honourable course to pursue. Should she tell him plainly that she disliked him so much as to make the thought of marrying him odious to her, and put it to him whether he would hold her to the promise made by her mother? Surely that must be what Mr Lawrance meant. Disagreeable it would certainly be, but soon over, for after her explanation he must release her. Yes, it would be the best and fairest thing to do, both for herself and for him."

A trifling circumstance threw its weight into the scale, and, increasing her detestation of

Lord Silverton, determined her to take this course. Her little dog Charlie, who, as we have seen, was a great favourite and very highly prized by his mistress, accidentally ate some poison which had been put down in the housekeeper's room for rats, and notwithstanding the remedies Geraldine used, died in convulsions a few hours afterwards. She was still so much of a child that this misfortune cost her many tears, and she was crying very bitterly in the drawing-room when Lord Silverton came in. Of course he was much astonished; but when the tragedy of the morning was explained to him, he burst out laughing. "Lord bless me, Geraldine, I thought your brother was dead," he said. "Why, what a fool you are to cry about a little cur dog!"

Geraldine's tears dried up in a moment, as she raised her head and said, "I was very fond of poor Charlie;—and I don't think any one a fool for loving a dog."

"What a rage you're in! Well, I must say I'm very glad; you know I always told you I

didn't like little dogs littering about the house; and he was a horrid yelping little brute."

Geraldine was now divided between astonishment and anger. Charlie had been the general pet of the house; her father and mother and Mr Lawrance had all testified a becoming amount of sympathy for her loss; and as for Arthur, he was nearly as much distressed as Geraldine herself. Lord Silverton was the first person who had spoken of the departed Charlie in anything but terms of regret, and she was very much hurt. She was about to make a sharp retort, and then at once proceed with her meditated explanation, when Lady Bournemouth, who took care never to leave her daughter alone with Lord Silverton for long together, entered the room.

"I suppose Geraldine has told you of the sad misfortune we had this morning," she said. "Poor dear little Charlie! we are all quite distressed about it. I never thought Lord Bournemouth could have cared so much about any pet dog, for he does not like them generally, but he was saying just now how he

missed the sound of the little footsteps pattering after Geraldine when she came into his room."

At this pathetic mention of her favourite, Geraldine's tears flowed again, while Lord Silverton replied: "Oh, well, Lady Bournemouth, I have just been telling her I don't see any sense in crying about a little beast of a dog. I dare say she was very fond of him; but I hate little curs, and the more of them die the better, I think."

"Dear me, Lord Silverton; every one has his different tastes, of course; but I am sure you must be sorry for poor Geraldine. For my part I was excessively fond of Charlie; but gentlemen don't generally like ladies' pets, I believe."

"Oh no—they're no good to any one; I've promised her a big dog when we are married—that's the thing for her."

"I don't want a big dog," said Geraldine. "I don't like them."

"It is rather soon to talk of filling up Charlie's place," said Lady Bournemouth,

suavely. "One never likes, when one has just lost a pet, to have another proposed in its stead."

"Oh, I dare say. I don't know though; one gets tired of things. I'm always very glad to lose a dog or horse, for they have always some fault, and then one has a chance of suiting oneself better."

"I suppose you don't easily attach yourself to animals," said Lady Bournemouth, in despair at these sentiments being enunciated before Geraldine. "There are so many differences of opinion on these points. Geraldine's horse and pony are quite weaknesses with her, and she thinks they suit her precisely."

"Lord bless me now, I shouldn't have thought it. Tell you what, Geraldine, I don't half like that Hornet of yours. I wonder a good judge like you should keep him. Bad hind quarters—mere showy-looking beast. There's a mare in my stables will suit you a great deal better."

"She can have both," said Lady Bourne-

mouth. "Geraldine is so fond of riding, I have no doubt she can give two horses employment."

"Oh, I don't know about that. I haven't room for any more beasts."

Lady Bournemouth heartily wished Lord Silverton would take his leave. He was perpetrating a series of blunders of the most stupid description, and do what she would, she could not stop him. To her great relief he rose to go, saying as he did so, "I say, I thought we were to make a party to go and see my place."

This was a favourite plan of his, as he wanted Geraldine to see the rooms he was fitting up for her; and Lady Bournemouth, by her husband's advice, had agreed to it, hoping that the sight of the manifold beauties of Silverton Hall might produce some effect on her daughter. She felt, however, that this was not the moment to propose it, and hastily replied: "Really we have so many engagements, that it is difficult to name a day. The best plan will be for me or Ge-

raldine to write to you when we are a little less occupied ; or we shall see you, here or elsewhere, and can arrange it probably then."

And with this promise he was with difficulty prevailed upon to leave.

CHAPTER XV.

They, by parks and lodges going,
See the lordly castles stand;
Summer woods about them blowing
Made a murmur in the land.

* * * *

Parks with oak and chestnut steady,
Parks and order'd gardens great,
Ancient homes of lord and lady,
Built for pleasure and for state.

TENNYSON.

In compliance with Lord Silverton's incessant solicitations, Lady Bournemouth at last fixed a time for going to Silverton Hall.

It was a lovely day; they started early in the morning, and were to have luncheon there. The drive was long, and before it was half over, Geraldine was so wearied and tormented with her lover's incessant folly, that she determined to take an opportunity of speaking to him that very day.

Silverton was a splendid place, and any one might have been excused for feeling proud of being the owner of it. Geraldine could quite sympathize with Lord Silverton's admiration of the magnificent timber in the park, but was surprised to find he estimated it solely by its money value, and was quite heedless of its glories of beautiful foliage, bough, and trunk.

"Look, Geraldine, that is a lovely view at the end of that glade," said Lady Bournemouth, pointing to a beautiful reach of country appearing through the trees.

"Oh, that's nothing, Lady Bournemouth; that's all over old Dick Stanfield's property. Now I'll show you by and by a view where it's all mine as far as you can see."

"Still it is very pretty," said Lady

Bournemouth. "If I were you, I would have a seat placed somewhat under those trees. That is just the sort of view Geraldine enjoys."

"She must see about all that herself. However, she mustn't have one there, for that's where the pheasants are bred. I say, Geraldine, where are we to go after we are married? I hate a lot of people, and you like scenery and that sort of thing, so we'll go to some place where we can be quiet. What do you think of the Highlands?"

"Wherever you please," said Geraldine.

"She has never been abroad," suggested Lady Bournemouth, who could not think this plan of going to a quiet place a wise one. "Are you fond of the Continent, Lord Silverton?"

"Oh Lord, no—I've never been there, at least; but I can't talk their confounded languages, and what's a fellow to do then? Much better stay in England. If Geraldine likes a trip to Ireland or Scotland, I'm agreeable; but I won't go further."

"Well, there is time enough to settle that. Really, this is splendid," she continued, as they drove up to the house; "Lord Bournemouth told me it was a fine place, but he had not prepared me for anything so beautiful as this."

The house was, indeed, both beautiful and curious, and Geraldine, with her passion for the antique, was forced, in spite of herself, to feel interested. She was soon recalled to a sense of her actual position by Lord Silverton's taking her hand as she alighted from the carriage, pulling her into the hall, and saying to the old house-keeper—the very beau-ideal of a house-keeper in such a house—"Oh, I say, Mrs Fernshaw, this is Lady Geraldine Vivian, your future mistress, you know. I want to show her the rooms that are being done."

Mrs Fernshaw curtseyed, Geraldine blushed scarlet, as she felt the two or three servants who were standing about stare at her curiously; and Lady Bournemouth, really pitying her daughter, came forward, and contrived to effect a diversion. They went immediately to the rooms that were to be Geraldine's, as it was

clear that Lord Silverton would leave them no peace until they had been seen. They were three in number, bed-room, dressing, and sitting-room, in a pleasant part of the house, overlooking the flower-garden. Everything that had been done was in the most costly style, but it was evidently upholsterer's work; there was not a trace of a guiding taste, or of individuality of any kind. Geraldine's quick eye detected numerous faults in design and execution, but she gave a listless word of approval when required to do so. What did it signify? She should never live there.

Lady Bournemouth, whose taste in furniture was excellent, also noticed these defects silently, and thought it a pity anything had been begun before Geraldine came. A man never understands these things—especially, she might have added, a man like Lord Silverton. Was ever anything so stupid as having a sitting-room up-stairs, in a country house, when there were two or three charming rooms below, opening on the garden? And where, with all these painted panels, was the child to hang her prints, and drawings, and portraits? Why not leave

all this for her to settle, and give her a pleasant occupation and interest in her new home? However, Geraldine must alter all this; no doubt she would be able to do so by degrees. One thing did surprise her, and that was, that her daughter did not at once express her disapproval of certain atrocious coronets with which the rooms were being decorated, and which, being only just begun, could easily be counter-ordered. Lady Bournemouth absolutely shuddered as she looked at them, and wondered more and more at Geraldine's silence. She little guessed what was passing in her daughter's mind.

"Now then," said Lord Silverton, "we've seen all there is to be seen; suppose we go to luncheon."

"It is half-past one," said Lady Bournemouth; "if we have luncheon now, we can see the old part of the house and the pictures afterwards."

"Oh, Lord, you don't mean to say you care about all that old rubbish? Well, the horses must bait, and you may as well do that as nothing. I say, Mrs Fernshaw, after luncheon

Lady Geraldine wants to look at the show rooms."

"Can you not show them to us yourself?" suggested Lady Bournemouth in an aside.

"I would if I knew anything about them, but, upon my honour, I don't. Here's Fernshaw has got the whole story at her fingers' ends, and I don't know the name of a single picture, or the date of a single, what do you call 'em? in the house. She'll do it much better. Now, Geraldine, come on. I've had the silver service put out to-day for you to see. Pretty, ain't it? Cost my father no end of money, I can tell you."

"I dare say it did," said Geraldine.

The luncheon, as might be expected, passed off very silently, and she was thankful when her mother rose, and begged Lord Silverton to summon Mrs Fernshaw. The show part of the house was very interesting, and not being annoyed by its owner's presence, Geraldine gradually woke up, and examined the beautiful pictures and curious antique furniture with such eagerness, that Lady Bournemouth began to hope her plan was succeeding.

"Really, this is extremely handsome," she observed, as they came to a room fitted up with splendid silver inlaid furniture.

"This is the king's room, my lady," said Mrs Fernshaw; "it was fitted up for Charles the First, when he came to Silverton. The furniture was brought from Venice by the Venetian ambassador, and cost forty thousand pounds."

"This is the first old room I have seen which looks as if one could really live in it," said Lady Bournemouth. "Even now, Geraldine, I have seldom seen as handsome a toilet as this, and the looking-glass is far better than our English ones."

Geraldine was examining the silver sconces on the walls, and the dogs on the hearth, and, as her mother spoke, came and stood before the glass. To her great disgust, as she looked at her own reflection in it, over her shoulder appeared Lord Silverton's head. He had followed them here, and now broke in with "Well, what do you think of this? Handsome, ain't it? I say, how should you like to

have this in your room? Make it look pretty, wouldn't it?"

"Oh no," said Geraldine, "you should leave it here—this room is quite perfect. Besides, this is one of the show-rooms, and the sight should not be spoilt."

"Oh, hang that—who cares about the people who come bothering over here to see the place? Besides, I tell you what, Geraldine, it will save me no end of money to put this in your room, and, as your mother says, one could scarcely get anything handsomer."

"Dear Geraldine always thinks of every one before herself," said Lady Bournemouth. "She cannot have anything without wishing to share it with others. But really, Lord Silverton, I am inclined to agree with her. It would be a pity to spoil this little *bijou* of a place."

"Lord bless me, what does that matter? Things are made to be used, I think. Well, this is the best thing to be seen in the house. Suppose we come down to the garden. There's the gardener been cutting no end of a great nosegay for Geraldine."

They went down to the garden, which was, as Lord Bournemouth had truly said, a perfect fairyland. Geraldine's love of flowers overcame her resolution to be silent, and she could not help expressing her admiration. Lady Bournemouth, who was now thoroughly tired, sat down on a seat under a beech-tree, and proposed that Lord Silverton should take her daughter round the gardens. To her surprise, Geraldine assented immediately. More and more she congratulated herself on the success of the day. They walked away together, and after some little time Lord Silverton proposed that they should sit down and rest in a cool shady place near a fountain. Geraldine agreed with a beating heart, for now, she felt, the time had come for speaking. It was difficult to begin, for every succeeding day—this day especially—had more firmly riveted the chains around her. She wished she had done it at first. But better late than never—and so, after a minute's consideration, she said, "I have been wishing to speak to you alone, for the last few days."

"Eh, what? Speak to me alone? Well, what do you want?"

"I think you must be aware that this engagement is not agreeable to me."

Lord Silverton turned round and looked her straight in the face, with an expression of angry surprise, but said nothing.

Geraldine, resolutely steadying her voice, continued:

"I have never deceived you about this! You knew that my mother accepted you against my positive wishes?"

She waited for an answer, and her voice and manner imperatively required one.

"Well, if you come to that, I knew you were not very sweet upon me," said Lord Silverton, moodily betaking himself to sucking the top of his stick.

"You remember that I refused you when you proposed to me, and have never accepted you since?"

"Yes."

"You cannot think that we shall be happy, if we do marry?"

"I don't know about that,—when we are married you are mine, you know; and it's you I want."

"It would be very little use, I fear, to tell you that I should be miserable; but do you expect to be happy yourself?"

"Oh, never fear for me, I don't want to be always billing and cooing, you know; we shall do as well as most people."

"Indeed, I doubt it. To speak plainly, Lord Silverton, the prospect of this marriage is utterly odious to me; and I put it to you, whether, knowing that, you would wish our engagement to go on?"

Lord Silverton looked at her for a moment with a hard, uneasy glare, and sullenly replied, "Yes."

"Can you wish to marry a woman, knowing that she positively dislikes and despises you?"

Lord Silverton suddenly rose up.

"Now look here, Geraldine. Marry you I shall and will, whether you like it or not, and when we are married I'll have none of these tempers. Despise me, indeed! A pretty thing for Lady Silverton to despise her husband!

Let me tell you it 's the first time any one has said as much to me, and, by Heaven! it shall be the last. Come back to your mother; I'll see what she says to all this."

He caught her hand, dragged her off the seat, shaking her roughly at the same time. A more cowardly woman than Geraldine might have trembled at his violence and the expression of his face, but she was brave by nature, and was perfectly reckless with despair. Brave as she was, however, she now, from very fear, secretly determined that, come what might, she would never be his wife. For her life, she would not have dared to marry him.

They went back to Lady Bournemouth, and as she made room for them on the seat, Lord Silverton pushed Geraldine towards her.

"Here, Lady Bournemouth, what 's the meaning of your daughter's conduct?"

"I have been telling Lord Silverton," said Geraldine quietly, but growing deadly pale, "that I am engaged to him quite against my own wishes; and have put it to him, whether he still wishes to marry me."

"And I say, have her I shall and will, whether she likes it or not."

"Geraldine! Lord Silverton!" exclaimed Lady Bournemouth, rising in great agitation, and looking from one to the other—"what is the meaning of this?"

"Talks of despising me, indeed! A pretty way you've brought her up!"

"Geraldine, surely you have not used such unbecoming language to your future husband?"

"Ay, confound her impudence! that she has. I wish I were married to her, that 's all."

He was proceeding to use some tolerably strong oaths, when Lady Bournemouth interrupted him.

"Lord Silverton, you really terrify me. Pray be calm. Geraldine is quite ill. There must be some mistake—some misunderstanding—you frightened her, or she took offence at some imaginary slight. A mere lovers' quarrel. I will arrange it all. Will you be good enough to get a glass of water, and order my carriage? I am afraid she will faint."

"I shan't go back with you after the way she has treated me; I shall stay here," said Lord Silverton, sulkily.

"Perhaps you are right; she is really ill, and quite tired out. It is nothing. If you will call on us when you come to London, you will find everything just as it was before, I assure you. You are not used to the fancies of girls. This sort of thing occurs in every engagement, but it will be quite different when you are married. Only you must not frighten her."

This was said in a hurried aside, and so far produced its effect, that Lord Silverton promised to call, "and hear if Geraldine had any explanation or apology to offer." Lady Bournemouth well knew he might look in vain for either, but of course did not dispute the point.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Madam! if I have erred through love,
I look for pardon from above,
And shall not look in vain.
True love is prompt, and will not wait
Till chance or hazard ope
* * * *
If love is hasty, it is blind,
And will not bear to wait." AYTOUN.

IT may be imagined that Geraldine's position was now almost unbearable. Both her father and mother were extremely angry with her, and did not conceal it; and as her attempt had failed, she was very awkwardly

situated with regard to Lord Silverton. Again and again she protested against her marriage, but not the slightest notice was taken of her tears and prayers; while day by day she became more firmly resolved that nothing should induce her to become his wife. He showed a spite and malice, and at times a violence, that terrified her; and it was quite certain that all hope of her enjoying even an immunity from persecution in her married life was over. She was utterly driven to despair, and would now have shrunk from scarcely any means that could have been suggested to free her from her dreaded husband.

Three days before her marriage, she was sitting in her old school-room, expecting one of Lord Silverton's hated visits, and meditating various impossible plans of escape, when the door opened, and Arthur entered.

"You promised me a game of battledore and shuttlecock at twelve, and the clock has just struck. I have got the battledores in our school-room—it is higher than this; besides, we shall be out of the way of Lord Sil-

verton if he comes;—no one will think of looking for you there."

Unwilling to disappoint the boy, Geraldine slowly followed him down-stairs. Mr Lawrance was seated at the table, writing. He raised his eyes as she came in, and instantly perceived that she had been crying—no unusual occurrence now.

"This battledore is quite damp," said Geraldine after a short time; "there is a fire in the drawing-room; take it there and warm it."

Arthur ran off with the battledore, and Geraldine sat down by the window, not noticing how keenly the tutor's eyes were fixed upon her. He was indeed certain that the proper moment for speaking had come. From hints that had been dropped, he was tolerably well-informed as to what had taken place at Silverton Hall, and felt very sure that she would look on any fate as preferable to a marriage with Lord Silverton. Lady Bournemouth had played his game for him, and having 'a fair chance given him,' he now proceeded to make what he called a fair use of it. He ap-

proached her, and after very few preliminaries, for there was little time to spare, plunged at once into the middle of his subject. How he began, neither he nor Geraldine could remember afterwards, but she suddenly found herself listening to a most vehement declaration of affection, without the power or the wish to stop it. Here was the prospect of deliverance that she had sighed for! Coming at this time, it seemed to her as if sent by Heaven. She formed her resolution while he was speaking, and when he seized her hand, and implored her to give him some answer, she did not attempt to withdraw it. He was overjoyed, for not even his presumption had aspired to so easy a conquest. Nor would he have obtained it, had her destined husband been one degree superior to Lord Silverton.

At this moment Arthur came back with the battledore.

"Why, Arthur," said Mr Lawrance quickly, "you should have taken this one as well. It wants warming as much as the other."

The boy ran off again, and Mr Lawrance employed the time of his absence so well, that

before he returned, Geraldine Vivian had consented to elope on the morrow with her brother's tutor.

She returned to her room amazed, stunned, in a tumult of feelings, among which fear held the chief place. It had all been brought about so quickly, that she was like one walking in her sleep, and under the influence of some hideous dream. What a difference had one short hour made in her prospects! What would every one say? What would Lindon and Arthur think? The first question was much easier to answer than the last. She could easily imagine the astonishment of some, the indignation of others, the sorrow of her friends, and the triumph of her enemies. All this was as nothing to her. She felt that on the step she had taken depended her earthly happiness or misery, and, with that at stake, could not trouble herself about the opinions of by-standers. And as this conviction forced itself on her mind, she was seized with a perfect agony of terror. The exceeding rashness of thus venturing on her fate without the counsel of one older head or clearer judgment than

her own, the thought that she was going to cast off the love and friendship of those dearest to her, that in weal or woe she must henceforth rejoice or sorrow by herself—it blanched her cheek, and the life-blood died away from her heart with a deadly fear. Superior as she thought Mr Lawrance to Lord Silverton, intimate as she had been with him, friendly as was the feeling she entertained for him, what would she not give to recall her hasty promise? But it was too late—too late! Honour demanded that she should not retract—and come what might, she would abide by her plighted word. The longer she thought of it, the more dangerous and uncertain her future life seemed. Should he, who now promised so fair, turn out false, and unkind, and neglectful, what would become of her, cast off by her friends and protectors! Or even if her husband's family disliked her, or were coarse and vulgar-minded, how much misery might they cause her, how should she bear to associate with them, and become one of them? As she thought of these things, a marriage with Lord Silverton did not seem so utterly unendurable. If married at

the positive desire of her parents, she could always claim their protection in case of actual violence; and for anything else, she might perchance have been able to command respect, or at least fear enough, from him to shield herself from everything but that neglect which would be the most precious of boons. Unhappy, lonely, solitary, she might be, but these might possibly be the worst evils which would fall to her lot; and how could she tell what might happen to her when married to Mr Lawrance? We have said before that she liked him, but it was not with the entireness and confidence usual at seventeen. Perhaps the very fact of his proposal told against him; she would not have owned it to be a shameful breach of confidence, even to herself; but in the bottom of her heart she felt that it was so. She was now in a worse position than before. Engaged by her parents to Lord Silverton, engaged by herself to Mr Lawrance, detesting one prospect, and distrusting the other, yet forced to choose either the one or the other before twenty-four hours had elapsed — her perplexities were great, and she could see no

way out of them. Puzzled, distracted, confused, and frightened—her brain seemed incapable of thinking, at the very moment when her judgment should have been clearest, and her reason strongest. To the tumult of thoughts which had disturbed her mind, succeeded a species of mental apathy or stupor; involuntary, but so overwhelming, that she was compelled to give up the struggle, and wait inertly till circumstances decided her one way or the other.

Meanwhile Mr Lawrance, fearing lest she should regret the rash step she had taken, did not let the grass grow under his feet, but hastened to complete the necessary preparations. Another interview with her was positively indispensable, but the means of obtaining it—as the readings had been dropped—were far from clear. It was compassed at length, through Arthur's unwitting agency. Mr Lawrance found her looking pale and ill, but extremely calm, and apparently quite ready to fulfil her promise. So surely did he reckon on her attachment, that he even went so far as to offer

to release her if she desired it. To his consternation she hesitated, but, after a short pause of deep and anxious thought, she replied decidedly, "No, I am ready to abide by my word."

He felt her manner to be unsatisfactory, but she added not a word more, though he remained silent several minutes to give her the opportunity of so doing; and he was obliged to speak of the time and manner of their flight. This was a very difficult matter to arrange, as Geraldine had little liberty, and was seldom left alone for long together. At last they settled that the next morning she should feign a violent headache, and retire to her room, requesting that she might not be disturbed. She was then to put on her walking things and descend by the back-stairs to the school-room, from whence, watching her opportunity, she was to slip out, and at the corner of the street Mr Lawrance would be in waiting for her with a cab. They calculated that by proceeding at once to the church they could

be married almost before her absence was discovered, and certainly before any effectual pursuit could be made.

This plan was full of risk, but no better one could be devised. It seemed absurd to hope that Geraldine, the carefully-guarded, could abscond and be married, in broad daylight, between breakfast and luncheon. It must be attempted, however, and, to say the truth, she liked the scheme none the worse for its rashness and daring,—which perhaps Mr Lawrance had foreseen when he proposed it.

"But my luggage, my clothes," said Geraldine; "it will not be much, but I must take some."

"True," replied Mr Lawrance, musing. "I have it now," he continued; "you are going to a party this evening? Then pack up your box before you go, and hide it under the sofa. Be sure it is small and light, and I will find an opportunity of carrying it off when you are gone. I can take it to a friend's house near the church, and after the ceremony we will call for it.

Don't put any name or address, except 'Care of Mr Wilson, —— street.'" This point being settled, they remained talking for some time, or rather he remained talking, for he was describing the delight of his mother, when he should bring home his beautiful and high-born bride. An unlucky subject, for it naturally recalled her own parents and brother to her mind, and she began picturing vividly to herself their grief and indignation when her flight should be discovered. But Mr Lawrance, perceiving this, so dexterously enlarged on the misery of being tied for life to such a man as Lord Silverton, and so vehemently—and yet with such hesitation, as though his indignation forced it from him against his will—exclaimed against Lady Bournemouth's cruelty in wishing to sacrifice such a daughter, and so worked on the simple-minded girl by these arts, that for the time she lost her distrust, and was so far blinded as to consider him worthy of her truest love and esteem. And matters being brought to this pass, Mr Lawrance suggested the expedi-

ency of her going to pack up, to which she assented, and ran up-stairs to her own room with a heart considerably lightened. Packing-up was not an easy task to her inexperience. The box was very small, and when she had selected many things as absolute necessaries, she found to her dismay that it would not hold a third part of them. But by sacrificing several favourite gowns, everything was put in, including an evening dress, and a box containing some money and a few trinkets, given her by her aunt and uncle. The next thing was to decide on her wedding dress. She was sorely tempted to wear a certain bewitching blue muslin of the newest colour, pattern, and make, but feeling it was too conspicuous, had prudence enough to put it aside. After a little more searching, a quiet unpretending silk was fixed upon, accompanied by a barège shawl, and a plain straw bonnet. When these articles had been placed in one of her drawers, and the box locked and pushed under the sofa, it was time to dress for the party. Mr Lawrance had judged wisely in giving her so

much occupation that no leisure for thought remained.

That evening Lord Silverton persecuted her more than ever, and as she returned home, disgusted, frightened, and wearied, she was less inclined to regret the step she had taken, and thought with pleasure of her approaching escape.

The next morning found her with a violent headache, thereby saving her from the trouble of feigning one, and affording her a reasonable excuse for retreating to her own room directly after breakfast, and begging to be left entirely alone.

Now that the time had come, she could hardly summon resolution to proceed with her undertaking; but the hours were flying rapidly, having gone so far she could not draw back, and therefore with trembling hands and tearful eyes she hurriedly began to put on her walking-dress. Locking the door after her, she ran down the back stairs, fearing every minute to meet one of the servants; and reached the school-room, her heart beating so violently that she was perforce obliged to stop

and take breath. Her head was throbbing painfully, her knees knocked together, and it was with difficulty that she reached a chair. There was little time for rest, for in a few minutes the hall porter was, from some unusual cause, called away from his post; and as such another opportunity might not occur, she was forced to take advantage of it, and make her way out at once. How she reached the corner of the street she never knew; certain it is that she would not have seen Mr Lawrance, but that he took her hand, and half led, half dragged her to the cab. She pressed her hands to her forehead, for her head ached almost insupportably, and tried to turn her thoughts on the solemn ceremony about to be performed, but she found the attempt useless, and was obliged to lean back in the cab, silently enduring the pain as best she might. Every jolt over a stone, every additional noise caused her torture, and when they stopped at the church door, Mr Lawrance lifted her out, so far senseless that the clergyman refused to marry them, till, as he said, "the young woman was in a condition to understand the

nature of the vows she was taking on herself." This recalled Geraldine to her senses sooner, and more completely, than any restoratives would have done; the fear of being followed and taken home after she had disgraced herself by her flight, took possession of her; and, after the pew-opener had brought her a glass of water, she was able to stand before the altar without assistance, and pronounce the responses audibly. In half an hour they came out of the church, and reëntered the cab which had been directed to wait, and in that brief half-hour Geraldine Vivian had renounced kindred and friends, and bound herself for ever to a scheming adventurer. Again she sank back and closed her eyes without saying a word, nor did she look up till they stopped at the London Bridge Station. They were to go to St Leonard's, where Mr Lawrance had engaged a lodging for a month, considering that it united the three requisites of quiet, cheerfulness, and a beautiful country.

CHAPTER XVII.

When I waked,
I cried to dream again.—*The Tempest.*

The month had passed, and brought with it some changes. At first Geraldine enjoyed her present quiet and peace greatly, and felt perfectly satisfied with her choice. They rode and drove to every place that was worth seeing in the neighbourhood, and no one could be more attentive than Mr Lawrance, or a

pleasanter companion. She often compared with satisfaction his consideration for her wishes, and intelligent conversation, with the lack of those qualities displayed by Lord Silverton on the memorable day at Silverton Hall.

And yet, after a time, everything did not seem quite so rose-coloured. She felt a little doubtful about her husband; every now and then she fancied there was something concealed that she had not fathomed—his temper did not seem quite so good as she had supposed it, and he was not quite so refined in his language and manners as he had appeared when in her father's house. Certainly he was apt to be put out about trifles, and his treatment of servants and other inferiors often made her excessively shy. Of course this gave her great uneasiness; and she had a vague feeling of being on the top of a mine which might explode at any time, a feeling not conducive to happiness or confidence between man and wife. So a sort of constraint imperceptibly grew up; a constraint which he felt as much, if not more than she did, and which gave him a desire to do and say something which should break the ice

at once and for ever. He was tired of acting, and longed for her to know the worst of him.

Soon after they had arrived, he returned to London, to be present at his sister's wedding. Emily had, quite unexpectedly, received an offer from a Mr Turnbull, a junior partner in a wine-merchant's house. It was an excellent marriage for her, and her brother was greatly pleased with it. Mrs Lawrance secretly sighed over the rejected minister, but Emily was quite determined not to accept him, and in a worldly point of view the wine-merchant was beyond all comparison the best match. She was a fine, handsome girl; Mr Turnbull had seen her in church, been struck with her beauty, and, on being introduced to her, with her shrewdness and practical sense, and had proposed after a fortnight's acquaintance. Though she knew little of him, what she knew she liked, and she was determined to escape as soon as possible from her mother's set. He was sensible, well-informed, and gentlemanlike, very superior to his bride and her family in every respect. His father had opposed

the marriage at first, expecting his son to do better; but Emily had made her own way, showing more tact than could have been hoped for; and at the time the marriage took place, Mr Turnbull's family were almost reconciled to it.

It cost William Lawrance a good day and night's hard thinking, to devise some pretext for not taking Geraldine to the wedding, which should be valid both with her and with his own people, and it was but a lame affair when invented. But the idea of bringing her into the gathering of vulgarities which he well knew would take place on the occasion of his sister's marriage, was not to be contemplated; introducing her to his family at all was a prospect which gave him a qualm whenever he thought of it; and therefore he went alone. He only staid away two nights, and Geraldine was very glad when he came back, for this was in the early days of their married life; and before she had begun to discover that he could not only be out of temper, but occasionally out of temper with her. Towards

the end of the last week, she desired their landlady, who cooked for them, to call in the bills, being her first effort at housekeeping on her own responsibility. She had left everything to Mrs Willcocks, and consequently their expenses were very great. Mr Lawrance was in the room when she opened the bills, and looked up at her with an exclamation of surprise.

"Do look at these bills, William!" she exclaimed; "I don't know much about it, but I am sure they are higher than they should be."

"Higher!" he said, rapidly casting his eye over them, "they are rather more than three times the sum my mother told me would be sufficient. What have you done to manage so badly?"

"I have not managed at all," was Geraldine's perfectly true reply, "I know nothing about it—how should I?"

"But you must learn. We shall be ruined if you go on in this way. You really might have taken more pains about it, and, at least, had the bills in every week."

"Ought I? you should have told me. I don't mind what trouble I take, for I know we are very poor."

"You needn't cast that in my teeth," he said, roughly; "if you didn't like poverty, you shouldn't have married me."

"William!" cried Geraldine, "what do you mean? I am not casting it in your teeth—we are very poor, and there is no use in disguising the fact."

"Well, you needn't keep harping upon it," he said more gently, "I am only afraid we shall get into difficulties, which, of course, you would feel more than I should. Let us look at these bills, and see what we can make of them."

Nothing could be made of them but the plain uncompromising fact that they were three times as much as he had expected.

"Such extravagance!" he said. "Here are a thousand unnecessary things. We could have done without the half of them. You must not be so helpless and childish. I tell you we shall be ruined."

"It's very unfair to reproach me," said

Geraldine, with tears in her eyes, "you knew I understood nothing about all this. I'm sure I am very willing to learn, if I had anybody to teach me. Shall I ask Mrs Willcocks about the prices of things?"

"Don't be silly," he answered. "Ask her! don't you see how she has swindled us already? You are worse than a baby."

"Don't call me silly," said Geraldine, her tears drying up with sudden anger; "you give me no help at all, and I am sure you ought to know more about it than I do."

"You may reproach me with my low birth as much as you please—"

"I am not reproaching you with your low birth," said Geraldine, drawing up her head, and speaking in cold, calm tones. "I could not if I tried—I am not accustomed to reproach any one with what should be no disgrace. Do not let us recriminate any longer—give me the money to pay these bills, and tell me what you wish done for the future."

He looked at her for a second, then took out his purse and gave it to her,

saying as he did so, "We must go to my mother, and get her to teach you. I will write and ask her to take a room for us, in the same house with herself."

Geraldine assented, and accordingly they left St Leonard's at the end of the week. Mrs Lawrance was waiting to receive them with as warm a smile as she ever permitted to relax her countenance, and Geraldine tried hard to greet her affectionately, feeling that everything depended on the first impression. She was however chilled and repulsed by her mother-in-law's cold, stern demeanour, though Mr Lawrance had tried to prepare her for it beforehand. They went up-stairs to the sitting-room, which was small and close, a great contrast to their bright little St Leonard's drawing-room. She had expected this, but not realized it; she was astonished and disgusted; nor was Mr Lawrance less so, seeing it, as he did, with the eyes of his high-born bride. His manner was conscious and embarrassed, Geraldine's nervous and low-spirited, which did not tend to improve matters; Mrs Lawrance only was perfectly calm and unmoved,

and proceeded to scold the slip-shod servant girl in precisely the way she did every day. She then turned to her daughter-in-law, and asked her if she would like to lie down till dinner was ready, an offer of which Geraldine, who had had a bad head-ache all the morning, was glad to avail herself. The bed-room was dark, dingy, and dirty, but she was too ill to care for that; she lay down on the bed, and closing her eyes, tried to rest and to shut out thoughts which were now seldom pleasant ones. She did not absolutely sleep, but she dozed for an hour or two, and when Mrs Lawrance came to tell her that dinner was ready, was surprised to find her head much better. There was a hot dinner in honour of the bride, who, however, felt little disposed to partake of it, though she did her best to seem pleased with everything. The repast over, she again retreated to her room, unpacked her trunks, and looked round to see if perchance she could find a stray book wherewith to amuse herself. All she discovered was a small volume on prophecy, and seeing "Priscilla Lawrance" written on the title-page, she rightly

concluded that it belonged to her mother-in-law, who indeed delighted to feed on prophetical pastures of the greenest description. This was a terrible little book; it was a perfect howl or shriek of woe, and presently reduced Geraldine to betake herself again to the bed in low spirits. Then came tea, a most mournful and silent meal, no one speaking a word, until Mr Lawrance suddenly said, "Geraldine, you will see your new sister to-night. Emily and her husband are coming," which announcement made Geraldine start and say, "Indeed! I shall be so glad to see her. You like Mr Turnbull, I believe?" turning to her mother-in-law.

"He is a person of good income, and what the world would call good connections," returned Mrs Lawrance solemnly; "a partner in the house of Sturgeon and Turnbull, wine-merchants; and, I trust, a young man of decided piety," she added; a conclusion which produced a smile on Mr Lawrance's countenance.

A loud knock was now heard at the door, and presently Mr and Mrs Turnbull entered.

Emily was much improved in appearance and style by her marriage; she was very well dressed, and looked extremely handsome. She had, however, assumed an importance and fussiness which gave her the appearance of being more ill-bred than she really was, and made Mr Lawrance very uneasy. Geraldine, being only too thankful to see some one who looked cheerful, was not disposed to be critical, and felt very tolerably satisfied with her sister-in-law.

She and Mr Turnbull were a great acquisition to the dull little party now assembled in Mrs Lawrance's sitting-room; they infused life, and even merriment, into the trio; they talked incessantly, and talked well. Geraldine found that she could like them, especially the husband. As for Emily, if blunt and inconsiderate at times, she was amusing and warm-hearted, and very anxious to be on good terms with Geraldine; there was enough good to counterbalance the bad, and anything was preferable to Mrs Lawrance's grim composure. The evening passed off pleasantly, even gaily; Geraldine was astonished when the clock struck

eleven, and the Turnbulls rose to go, promising to come again the next day.

She went up to bed; though, tired as she was, she did not undress immediately, but sat thinking by the fire till Mr Lawrance came up and proceeded to scold her in no very gentle terms for being so late. It was not the first time that evening that she had had reason to complain of his temper, for he had been put out by the meagre appearance of his mother's *ménage*, which struck him forcibly after his long absence. She made no reply, beyond a look of indignant surprise, which so far recalled him to himself, that, muttering some kind of apology, he began another topic, and did not attempt to find fault with her again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I cannot tell what coming years
May have reserved of grief for me;
I cannot tell what they may be,
How wrung with anguish, dimmed with tears.

But scarcely can a sadder morn
Than this upon my eyelids break,
When from a flattering dream I wake
On a forlorn reality.—TRENCH.

EVERY day that Geraldine passed under her mother-in-law's roof increased her anxiety to leave it. It is not too much to say that by this time she most heartily repented her im-

prudent marriage. The scales seemed to fall from her eyes, and she now saw her husband almost in his true light. While he was in her father's house, away from his own relations and his own associates, while his manners still retained the gloss his tact had thrown over them, she was not conscious of his great inferiority in tone of mind and feeling. But little by little, slowly at first, and very painfully to her, her illusions had been dispelled. The awakening began at St Leonard's—it advanced with very rapid strides as soon as he was fairly among his own people, and he could not, even had he wished it, maintain a different manner before his wife from that which was natural to him with them. It had always been an effort to him to assume it, even when at Lord Bournemouth's; an effort he was incapable of sustaining now that the outward pressure was taken off. Geraldine, to her surprise and bitter mortification, found that the man who had appeared to her so refined when in her father's house, was not in his own house at all above the standard of the vulgar people by whom she saw him surrounded, and

was in the habit of displaying a violence and moroseness of temper that she had never seen equalled, except by Lord Silverton. To her he did, at first, retain some slight recollection of the respect he had been used to pay her, and an uneasy consciousness that he was not her equal, which she, however unwillingly, could not help sharing. One good effect of this was that when he was disposed to be rough with her, it checked the angry retorts that would otherwise have risen to her lips, and her cold, grave displeasure so far overawed him, that he showed less of his violent temper to her than to any other person in the world. But he was not fond of her. He felt that she had found him out, and her grave dignity and conscious superiority continually galled and mortified him. Never were two people so soon and so completely disenchanted. Looking back, he wondered at the violence of the passion with which she had inspired him. True, she was almost as lovely as ever, but now that she was his, she seemed, and she was, further from him than ever. He was no longer her friend, and she would never love him; that he knew, and

cursed her in his heart; and his passion turned to bitter hate at the disappointment. He could not raise himself to her; he could not drag her down to him; she was immeasurably above him, and his success in concealing it hitherto only made the distance seem the greater when at length the veil shrivelled off.

And Geraldine would have given worlds to retrace her rash step, to have replaced herself in the position which she had voluntarily quitted. Viewed from this distance, she doubted whether she would not have been less miserable married to Lord Silverton, for then she would at least have been in her proper position, among those with whom she had been brought up, and with all the undeniable shields that rank and money can place around an ill-assorted marriage. She had feared insult and violence from him, but it seemed a doubtful point how long she should be secure from either with Mr Lawrance, and she had now not a single protector to whom she could appeal. She was utterly wretched, and none the less so for knowing that it was her own choosing.

The only person who entered into any of her distresses was Emily Turnbull. She knew her brother thoroughly, and, as a consequence, was not fond of him, though she always kept on good terms with him. Emily was by nature a thorough woman of the world, never quarrelling with anybody if it could possibly be avoided, and making the best of every one from motives of unconscious expediency. His selfishness, his meanness, his shallowness, every turn of his character, was as familiar to her as a well-read book, and she could scarcely understand any one being less clear-sighted than herself. To her, his marriage was utterly incomprehensible. What marvellous blindness could have made Geraldine—whose worth she was not slow to recognize—think him a hero, was a daily and hourly mystery to her; nor, after she was acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, could she, with her own independence of disposition, imagine that any girl could be driven into such a strait as to be unable to resist an unwelcome marriage successfully. However it might be, she was heartily sorry for her sister-in-law,

and watched her gradual initiation into the secrets of her new home with painful interest. Sympathy, she had perception enough to see, would be insulting and misplaced; so she awaited the course of events silently.

The very next morning after her elopement, Geraldine had gone through the usual form of writing to ask forgiveness, taking care to address her letter to her father. Little as she expected him to answer it, her disappointment was still great on receiving a note from the housekeeper, saying that the family would leave town in two days, and that she was directed to say, that her Ladyship could then come, or send, for the things she had left behind. The fact was that Lord Bournemouth, who was not so rigorously implacable as his wife, would have written in person, but that the difficulty of doing so without tacitly granting pardon—which he had no intention of giving—was so great, and his natural indolence so exaggerated it, that he let the time slip by, and was at last glad to adopt his wife's suggestion, and desire the housekeeper to write. Of course Geraldine could

not be aware of this, and thought that her father was as much enraged as she was well aware her mother would be. She wondered that Arthur had not found means to send her a line; not being aware that Lord Bournemouth —knowing that Arthur would neither be "to have nor to hold" if he knew his sister had written, but would insist on seeing her—had never let him see her letter, or hear one word of the transaction. He had been sent to a tutor soon after her elopement, preparatory to going to Eton when the summer holidays were over, and was more utterly miserable than ever a little fellow was before, bewailing the sudden and total eclipse of Geraldine, and shortly declaring that she had been abominably ill-used. Lord Bournemouth ordered him to be silent, and leave the room, not knowing what else to say. Geraldine, in utter ignorance of all this, continued to wonder, and arriving at no satisfactory conclusion, went to Belgrave Square as soon as she arrived in London, fetched away all her things, and then set herself seriously to work to make the best of her situation, and consider what was to be done next.

Her first object was to move from her mother-in-law's house, and to obtain, if possible, some employment for her husband, as their means of subsistence were absolutely nothing. Had it come to the worst, she would even have insisted on Mr Lawrance's again going out as a tutor, and endeavoured to find employment as a governess herself. She talked to her husband and talked to her mother-in-law about it, and many were the plans she revolved in her head. Mrs Lawrance was as anxious as herself about the matter, for starvation seemed staring them in the face, as Geraldine's fortune, whatever it might be, was only payable on her father's death, and therefore the young couple had simply no income at all. With all the scandal of his elopement still fresh, it was extremely difficult to obtain even a curacy for Mr Lawrance, and it had been several times suggested that he should drop his "Reverend," and obtain employment in some mercantile house, which his brother-in-law's connections rendered a far easier matter. But Mrs Lawrance was so unwilling to throw away the advantages of William's expensive education,

that she redoubled her exertions, canvassed her friends unceasingly, and at length her own and her son's joint efforts procured him a curacy worth ninety pounds a year, and a small house in one of the poorest and most populous parts of Westminster. This result was highly pleasing to Geraldine, as it necessitated a move from her mother-in-law's, and placed them, besides, at such a distance from her house that the two families would be little together. Also it was a good deal nearer to Belgrave Square, and consequently to her aunt and brother when they should return to London. These two, she still ventured to hope, would not utterly cast her off.

"William, I want you and Geraldine to come here, that we may talk about your affairs," said Mrs Lawrance to her son one evening.

Geraldine was pleased at her name being mentioned, for she had already observed an inclination on her husband's part to keep her in the dark on matters of business, which mortified her pride, and was really not fair to her.

The speech was a prelude to a long discussion about economy, in the course of which Mrs

Lawrance instructed Geraldine in a variety of contrivances whereby she herself had been enabled to keep house, for a lengthened period, on, so to speak, nothing a year; contrivances which astonished Geraldine by their marvellous ingenuity. They were all very useful, however, to people in the Lawrances' position, and the young wife did well not to despise them, for truly hers was to be a hard battle with poverty. Mrs Lawrance, who would have made any sacrifice for her son, proposed to give him part of her scanty income, an offer which he coolly accepted, though it cut Geraldine's pride to the quick. He was right, however, for certainly they could not dispense with it; as it was, their income did not exceed a hundred and thirty pounds per annum; little enough for two people, even without a family. It was agreed that they could only keep one servant, and Mrs Lawrance promised to find them an honest and hard-working one who would suit their purpose.

"William," said the mother, as Geraldine left the room, "your wife seems well disposed in all your worldly affairs, but with her bring-

ing up, how will she learn to manage? Our struggles and shifts will not suit her."

"What 's good enough for you is good enough for her, mother, I suppose. I shall stand no airs about her bringing up, I can tell you."

"Do not be harsh to her, William; as far as her light goes, she appears to be a well-meaning person, and, though no value is to be attached to the natural character, hers is what would be called amiable."

"She amiable and well meaning! You don't know her temper and her confounded high-bred ways. She's as proud as all the rest of them."

"Why then did you marry her? Alas, this is the end of all our struggles for worldly gain, sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. But doubtless it is for our good that it should be so."

"Never mind, mother; she'll turn out a good speculation yet. She must have something at her father's death, and there 's her brother who dotes on her, he will come home and get us something. And as to harshness,

I don't know what you call harsh, but I'll have my own way."

And Mrs Lawrance went her way comforted, but moralizing, and her son went his to plague his wife. She however was not in a humour to be plagued, and a braver and better man might have shrunk from her scornful silence and the cold contempt of her icy eyes. William Lawrance was afraid of his wife, and knew it, and the knowledge made him furious. He went back to his mother in such an evil mood that she saw something had happened, though she dared not ask him what.

As for Geraldine, she drew out of her workbox a small bottle marked "Laudanum," looked at it, put it down with a strong shudder, saying, "I dare not—I dare not now; but oh that I had died before I married him!"

CHAPTER XIX.

Heaven me such uses send,
Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad, mend.

SHAKSPEARE.

The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness,
And time to speak it in; you rub the sore
When you should bring the plaster.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was a cold drizzling day, and Geraldine Lawrance sat in a small poorly-furnished room, close to the window, to get what light she could upon her work, and shivering with cold, which the shawl thrown over her shoulders was insufficient to keep out. The fire was

very low, and for some reason or another she did not seem willing to replenish it. Everything about her looked cheerless and miserable, and she herself not the least so. She was very, very plainly dressed; her gown did not seem warm enough for the approaching winter season, and the boot which peeped from under it was a patched one, and patched by no shoemaker or cobbler either. Her long curls were gone, and her hair was braided back as simply as possible from the pale thin cheek, with no ribbon or velvet, or any kind of ornament, about it. She was busily hemming a coarse handkerchief, and as she worked, with one foot she rocked a little wicker cradle, in which lay a very young baby fast asleep. Presently the door opened, and a head was thrust in, which looked inquiringly round the room. A set of strongly-marked, determined features accompanied, and reddish hair adorned it.

"My Leddy," said the owner of the head, "if ye'll give me the money, I'll be after buying some chops for tea."

Geraldine took out her purse, saying as she did so, "You need not get more than three,

Susan; that will be enough for Mr Lawrance, and I am not hungry."

"Sure ye've had no dinner any more than the master, and ye'll never be getting your strength again if ye dunnot eat more meat."

"There is no fear, I will eat it when I want it," said Geraldine. "But, Susan, if you go out, bring that darning up here. I have hemmed four of these handkerchiefs, and they can wait better than the stockings."

Susan looked as if she would have dissuaded her mistress, but feeling that the darning was indeed a work of necessity, said nothing, but departed, and presently returned with a huge basket of stockings, and an account-book.

"There's a hantle of ironing to be done, so I'll be in again shortly," she observed.

"I'm afraid I am not strong enough to iron yet," said Geraldine doubtfully, "and yet, if I could only get on with the fine things, it would be such a help."

"Eh, sirs! hark till her!" exclaimed Susan, throwing up her hands and eyes. "Sure ye'll be killing yoursel'. Just ye no fash

yoursel'; and let the ironing gang its ain gate. 'Twill a' be done gin it's wanting."

"I hope so,—but at all events I can take this work off your hands, while you are getting the chops and the other things that are wanted. How thankful I am that we took Mrs Lawrance's advice, and always paid ready money for what we had!"

"It's saved us from a peck of troubles, that's certain," said Susan, who had a way of identifying herself with her mistress.

"This washing in the house, too, saves us a good deal, and I pride myself on the idea," said Geraldine; "but it increases our work immensely."

"Think o' the gude white siller it pits into our purse, my Leddy," said Susan. "But I'm ganging out; if a body comes to see your Leddyship, I've bid the lassie bide till I come back." So saying, she left the room, and a thundering rap at the door presently proved the utility of the precaution. A rustle was heard on the steep narrow stair-case, and enter Mrs Turnbull, arrayed in all the splendour of silk and velvet, and exhaling strong perfumes

from the laced handkerchief she held in her hand.

"My dear Emily!" said Geraldine, springing up, "out this wretched day!"

"Yes," said Mrs Turnbull, sinking back in the little stiff arm-chair; "I was out shopping this way, and so thought I would look in for half an hour's chat."

"You will have a cup of tea, I am sure," said Geraldine.

"No, I thank you. Susan is out, I suppose, as an untidy slip-shod girl opened the door, and you would have to get it yourself. And I prefer talk to tea."

This well-bred speech, which was delivered with a cool air of superiority, entirely failed to disconcert Geraldine. With a good-humoured laugh she replied, "You would not have long to wait, for the caddy is here, and I could have brought up the kettle and tea-things in a moment. But if you prefer talk, I have nothing more to say."

"Who is the girl?" continued Mrs Turnbull, in the same tone as before. "Have you taken her as a 'little foot page?'"

"Not at all; she comes for two days once a fortnight to help in the washing. She has been retained this afternoon later than usual, for the express purpose of opening the door."

"Really, Geraldine," said Mrs Turnbull, in a tone of compassionate remonstrance, "I can't think why you live in this way. You might be in the back-woods of America, with your one servant to do the dirty work, and yourself to do all the rest. Furnished lodgings, with the people of the house to do for you would be vastly more genteel."

"Do for us they certainly would, I suspect," said Geraldine, smiling; "my dear Emily, consider the expense. St Leonards taught me something about that. We must lay by in case of a family, of which this is a promising instalment," laying her hand on the cradle, "and how we are to do it in any other way, on our income, I really don't see. It is hard enough as it is, but, thank Heaven! we have as yet kept out of debt, and laid by."

"You are a most admirable poor man's wife," said Emily, in a much softer tone. "Brought up so differently as you were too!"

"A rich man's daughter makes a poor man's wife, you know," said Geraldine lightly. "I see Susan coming round the corner. Won't you be persuaded to have a cup of tea now?"

"No thank you!" said Emily, with affected horror, "your dragon would never forgive me. I can't think why you don't have a neat cheerful-looking maid servant, instead of that grim old woman."

"Who would flirt with the baker's boy, and continually step out to buy a ribbon, instead of working hard all day, and putting her hand to everything, as Susan does. Engaging her was the greatest kindness Mrs Lawrance ever did us, and I can never be grateful enough for it. Without her, all my efforts would not keep us clear."

"Not if your health continues to mend as slowly as it does now," said Emily, with again the softening of voice and manner. "I have brought you a fine pheasant, which came in a basket of game sent to Robert, by Lord Fitzgermaine, whose father is one of his clients or customers, or whatever you call it. There,

don't thank, and don't refuse; if you do, I shall give it to William, who was always remarkable for taking whatever he could get. I wish I could do more for you,—but you have plenty of wine, I know. Will you come out for a drive with me? I am afraid it is hopeless, you are always so busy, but I will go where you like, and do what you like."

"For mere amusement it would be hopeless," said Geraldine; "I can't afford to spend my time in that way. But I think I shall be glad to accept your offer a day or two hence, as I may have business;—that is, if you really don't mind going where I like."

"Not the least,—I am too happy to do anything for you," said Emily, who was really anxious to do her best for her sister-in-law, despite the licence she allowed her tongue. "Any day you please to send me a line, the carriage shall be at your service."

"That would be too bad," said Geraldine, "you might want it that very day. If next Thursday will suit you, I will find or make time; could you come for me at three?"

"That will suit me very well. I must go

now, for I promised to look in on my mother this afternoon."

"If you are really going, good-bye," said Geraldine. "Give my love to Mrs Lawrance, and don't forget Thursday at three o'clock."

And Mrs Turnbull departed, and entering her neat brougham, congratulated herself, as she sank back among the cushions, that she was not now poor, like her sister-in-law.

We may as well explain here what was the business which decided Geraldine to make the sacrifice of spending an afternoon from home. During the last few months she had occupied herself a great deal in writing. She wrote stories, sketches, essays, verses; anything, in short, which occurred to her. The time she was forced to spend in needle-work gave her many opportunities for composition; and once thoroughly arranged in her mind, she was not long in writing down her thoughts in her few leisure moments. She had a good stock of these papers ready, and the idea had struck her that she might gain a little money by selling them to magazines and other periodicals. Therefore she determined to drive to several of

the principal offices, and offer specimens of her productions, for, little as she knew of the world, she thought that the sight of Mr Turnbull's well-appointed brougham would do much to help her in disposing of her writings. How far she was right in this conjecture we shall presently see.

She sat working steadily for some time, with an expression of pleasant, rather than of anxious, thought, which lightened her brow, and gave her wonderful beauty of expression, instead of the smoother graces of her girlhood. But a man's step was heard on the stair-case, she raised her head, and oh, the haggard look of weariness and misery that crossed her worn face! Her husband entered the room, with ill-humour depicted in every line of his features, and in the very creaking of his boots, as he came in, with a heavy, noisy tread.

"What a wretched fire, Geraldine!" he began, "and tea not ready yet. Nothing ever is ready here! What time do you profess to have it, pray?"

"You know it will not be ready for a quarter of an hour, and I can't have Susan hurried;

she has only just come in," said Geraldine, coolly and decidedly, as she knelt down before the fire, and endeavoured to coax it into burning brightly.

"It's of no use—you may just as well leave it alone; you're only making the room smoke," was her husband's surly comment.

Geraldine continued her employment without taking the slightest notice of him.

"What have you been doing this afternoon?" she presently inquired, in a tone that was very quiet, but yet gave Mr Lawrance the impression that he had better not provoke her too far.

"Going all about the parish, and I do think it's without exception the very worst parish in London."

"Rather exaggerated, though it is bad, no doubt," observed Geraldine. "But you must be wet through; had you not better change your boots?"

"Thinking of your carpet," said Mr Lawrance, with a sneer.

"Very true, I am thinking of my carpet," was the cold rejoinder. "So change at once,

and perhaps tea will be ready by the time you come back."

Tea was ready by the time he came back, the fire was blazing brightly, the kettle singing on the hob, and altogether the little room looked cosy and cheery enough to put any one in good humour. Any one but Mr Lawrance, that is, for he was obstinately insensible to these mollifying influences, and remained moodily silent.

"Who has been here to-day?" he at length inquired abruptly.

"No one but Emily. Who else should?"

"Your cousin — Gertrude — what do you call her? She's not been near you, I suppose?"

"Lady Kincardine was here yesterday," replied Geraldine, coldly, though without any apparent annoyance. "I don't expect her to come every day."

"She has never asked you to her house, has she?"

"Because she knows that I shall come whenever I please."

"Well, to my mind, it's not paying you

proper attention not to ask you to dinner," said Mr Lawrance, mounting his high horse.

"I begged her on no account to do so," said Geraldine, "as I could not come."

"Not come! and why, pray?"

"You know we can't afford cabs."

"And your fine relations won't send their carriages for you, as Emily Turnbull does."

"I can't understand," said Geraldine, "why you have this wish to visit the Kincardines. I have declined their offer to send their carriage for us."

"And pray, Lady Geraldine, may I ask why you did so? I beg you to consult me in future, before declining invitations which relate to me as well as to yourself."

"Invitations from my relations concern me alone; and as the expense of suitable dresses would be far more than I can afford, I have told them that we do not go out in the evening."

"I might have liked to have gone. I presume the invitation was not for you alone."

For the first time Geraldine raised her eyes, and bursting into a laughing, answered,

"If you had gone once by yourself, you would never have had the chance again. But," she continued, resuming her gravity of manner, "as you choose to take this matter seriously, I will be serious too; and, once for all, I wish you to understand that I shall certainly not consult you about any invitations from my own relations. About visiting your people, I am always ready to do what you wish; about any other invitations I shall do as I think proper; and you know I mean what I say. Now let us say no more on the subject."

As usual she overawed him with her calm superiority, and instead of flying into a violent passion, as he would have done with any one else, he was glad enough to take refuge in silence and chops, and to be tolerably civil to her during the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XX.

A brother is born for adversity.

THURSDAY found Geraldine in a state of great anxiety and excitement about the success of her enterprise. She had toiled harder than usual all the week before, and had got her work so far advanced, that she could spare a couple of hours without much inconvenience. When the afternoon came, she carefully sorted out the best of several different kinds of compositions, and then dressed herself more gaily than she had done for many months previously. Emily Turnbull

was surprised at her elegant attire, and thought she must be going to visit some of her grand friends. Her astonishment was great, when Geraldine begged to be driven to the office of a well-known periodical in the Strand.

"For pity's sake, what are you going to do there?" she cried.

Geraldine laughed rather shyly, and replied, "It's only fair to tell you where I mean to go, and why. But you must promise to keep my secret from every one, even from Mr Turnbull."

"Well, to be sure!" cried Emily, when her sister-in-law had explained her plan, "and so you are an authoress! You are really indefatigable, and I hope you will succeed with all my heart. Do let me have a peep at those papers."

"No! no!" said Geraldine; "here we are at the place. Suppose I send in my card, and ask if Mr —— can see me; I think it may make an impression."

The answer was favourable, and Geraldine went in. Apparently her card had its

effect, and she herself had a still greater one, for she purposely assumed a grand air, and spoke as if money was the last thing she considered. Whatever may have been the cause, a copy of verses—which it is fair to say had really great merit—was accepted, and a small sum given for them on the spot. Elated with her success, Geraldine returned to the carriage, and directed the servant to drive to another office, where she hoped to dispose of a somewhat lengthy story. Here she was entirely unsuccessful with the story, but sold an "Essay on Languages;" and at another place got rid of a sketch in the style of "Our Village." The story was the most difficult of all the pieces she had brought to dispose off, but she was not to be discouraged, and as Mrs Turnbull's interest and patience were inexhaustible, they went from place to place, and finally parted with it late in the day for five pounds, on condition that her name should be published with it, a concession which was most unwillingly extorted. Altogether her afternoon's work brought her in ten pounds; no con-

temptible addition to her house-keeping and pocket money.

"How shall you spend it, Geraldine?" said Mrs Turnbull; "I hope some of it will go in buying a new winter dress."

"Only in retrimming the old one, which will do perfectly well when taken in and altered."

"But it is so old-fashioned!"

"I can alter it enough to prevent its being conspicuous, and that is enough for me; I can't pretend to lead the fashion,—merely to follow humbly in its wake."

"Then how shall you spend your money?"

"I hope to lay by part, and part will go in new pocket-handkerchiefs for William. Then I must see about getting a work-table for the sitting-room, that I may keep all my things to myself, and leave the middle table clear for him. I think I know where to get one second-hand, whenever I have time to look after it."

"Don't do that," said Emily, "for I can give you one. I have far too many in my drawing-room, and the one I am thinking of

will be exactly the thing for you, as it has a cheffoneer drawer, where you can lock up all your affairs. But if I do so, you must promise me to spend the money I shall save you in buying something for yourself."

"If that is all, I accept your offer with thanks, and will get myself a new winter bonnet, which I really want, and a hood for baby, which she wants just as much."

"By the by," said Emily abruptly, "I have always forgotten to tell you that I saw in the 'Times' last week the names of Lord and Lady Lindon, as passengers in one of the West Indian packets. I know your brother went to America, but is he married?"

"Not that I know of," returned Geraldine. "But," she added, flushing painfully, "it might be. I have no news of my family now."

"He may have married a West Indian heiress," said Emily, a little nervously.

"Possibly. It would be the best thing he could do," returned Geraldine, forcing a faint smile.

Emily said no more, feeling it to be a shy

subject, and Geraldine, in spite of two or three attempts, found it impossible to continue the conversation, or to begin a fresh subject. So many thoughts were passing through her mind! It might be—it probably was her brother bringing home, as Emily had suggested, a West Indian bride. Of course he knew of her marriage already; but would he seek her, and if he did, would he be able to find her? Not a creature at home knew her direction; going to see him was out of the question, and yet she so longed for a sight of his face! How would he meet her? With his old affection, or would he overwhelm her with reproaches? Heaven knew she had suffered enough for her fault; was this bitterness to be added to her punishment? And his wife—what was she like? Rich, of course, and handsome, she supposed, remembering his old taste for beauty; but would she be a jealous exacting woman, who would force him to give up his sister, even if he himself were inclined to love her as of yore? One only comfort she had; Gertrude was happily married, so, whether he returned married or single, there was no

fear of her peace of mind being disturbed by him.

The carriage stopped at her door, while she was thinking in this strain, and, thanking Mrs Turnbull mechanically, she gathered up her remaining papers, and entered the house.

"There's a gentleman in the drawing-room, my Leddy, who came an hour ago, and said he'd bide till yere Leddyship came hame," said Susan.

Geraldine turned deadly pale. "It is he!" she said to herself, and her heart beat so violently that it was with difficulty she could walk up-stairs.

But when she opened the door, and saw her brother, and heard his affectionate greeting, she sprang forward, and throwing herself into his arms, burst into tears, exclaiming incoherently, "Oh, Lindon, are you back at last? Oh, if you had been here then!"

Lord Lindon was extremely distressed. In general he hated a scene, but this was too real and genuine to excite any feeling but compassion. He tried to soothe her with the tenderest words, the fondest caresses he could

think of; he was so far successful that she dried her eyes, and was soon able to speak with tolerable composure. He thought it better to broach the subject of her marriage at once, and do away with all reserve between them. He learnt enough to know that Geraldine had not been the only person to blame, and that, if he had been at home, matters would have gone very differently. He saw that his sister was profoundly miserable, but was struggling bravely with her misery, external and internal; and honouring her stedfast resolution and uncompromising performance of duty, would do nothing to discourage her in her difficult task. He even suppressed much of his bitterness against Mr Lawrance, and promised to do his best to obtain preferment for him, that they might be relieved from the pressure of extreme poverty; and finally he gave her his address, and begged her to come and visit his wife, who, he affirmed, would be delighted to see her.

Geraldine appreciated the kind thought that prompted him to ask her to his house, where she might meet her sister-in-law, with-

out the embarrassment of her husband's presence, which his quick discrimination told him would be as intolerable to her as to him.

"And who is she, and what is she like?" she asked. "For I only heard to-day that you were married at all."

Lord Lindon looked pained. "And yet I wrote to you several times," he said, "and begged my mother to forward the letters."

"It is needless to say I never got them," said Geraldine, speaking very quickly, "but indeed it was not her fault. She did not know either my direction or my mother-in-law's."

"She could easily have discovered the first," said Lord Lindon, "for I had no difficulty when I wanted to find you out. My wine-merchant told me your brother-in-law's direction, and I went there this afternoon, and got yours."

"You have not answered my question about my sister-in-law," said Geraldine, abruptly.

"In the first place," returned Lord Lindon, "I am her second husband, and she is exactly nineteen. Her maiden name was Leonie

Marie Alphonsiare de Medina, and she was the daughter of an offshoot of the Medinia-Sidonia family, who had settled at Cuba, and made his fortune there. Being particularly handsome and accomplished, an old Spanish or Creole Don fell in love with her when she was fifteen, and married her, whereby she became the Señorita Leonie della Santa Croce de Losada. Of course I needn't tell you that she had no choice in the matter—she had scarcely seen any one else, and had a great idea of doing as her father told her. I imagine she soon found that to be a mistake, for the Don was a gentleman of far from irreproachable morals or manners, and she was miserable with him. Fortunately for her he died two years after her marriage ; and she, being left a young and rich widow, was immediately surrounded by suitors ; and—well—to cut my story short, I saw her and married her."

"A very sufficient compensation for two years' unhappiness," put in Geraldine, with a smile.

"That is her history," continued Lord Lindon; "as to her extraction, it is motley enough to justify the result. You know my old prejudice in favour of crosses, and my wife is an example that I practise what I preach. Her father, as I told you, was a Spaniard of good family, her mother was a Frenchwoman, and died soon after Leonie's birth. Her maternal grandmother was an Englishwoman; distantly connected with her first husband's family; her paternal ditto was a German, and as far back as you can trace her family, there has always been the same curious mixture of races."

"And you say the result is satisfactory," said Geraldine. "Tell me what she is like."

"You must see her for yourself, but she is dark, very beautiful, very clever, and what you would call intellectual, and just what a woman ought to be. She is a capital musician—you must hear her sing, you will be charmed—an excellent linguist, dances beautifully, and rides not quite so well as you, but still very well indeed. There! I have ex-

hausted my adjectives, and can only say, come and see."

"My poor Lindon!" said Geraldine, laughing, "how very far gone you are! It is easy to see you are only just married. I suppose you don't see any faults; but as she must have some, I am curious to know what they are. Of course you couldn't tell me if you would?"

"Or wouldn't if I could. I know very well what her faults are, but you shall discover them for yourself. I won't disclose anything to her prejudice."

"Very right," said Geraldine, "and I would rather see her with my mind unbiassed. So you may expect me as soon as I have re-trimmed my winter cloak, and made my winter gown fit to wear. It is too cold to go out without them, but you may be sure I shall work hard."

Lord Lindon's face grew grave as she talked of working for herself, and taking up her thin hand, he said, "I am sure you work too hard, Mina."

"Not at all; and not at all more than is absolutely necessary," she said. "But you have not admired my baby. You must learn to be a connoisseur in babies. My brother-in-law, Mr Turnbull, was her godfather, but I have called her Frederica, after you."

"I would have been its godfather if I had been in England," said Lord Lindon, "so you must let me give my namesake a godfather's present, and spend it in any way you think best."

And so saying, he drew out a fifty-pound note, and placed it between the baby's little hands.

"I will not refuse it," said Geraldine, "for we are in real want of many things which it will buy, and if taking money from you is not an absolute pleasure, it is at least very like one."

"Refuse it! of course not," said Lord Lindon, "I shall be seriously offended if you think of any such thing. But I must be off; you remember our direction, so come as soon as you can, and come to luncheon, for then Leonie will be certain to be in, and you must spend the evening with us."

"I will certainly come to luncheon, but I can promise no more than that. We will see. How do my father and mother like Leonie?"

"Very fairly," said Lord Lindon, dubiously; "I don't pretend to say that they like her as much as they would have liked an Englishwoman; say one of the Howards or St Aubyns, for instance. And her manners are freer and more independent than is usual in their set. But her beauty would mollify any one, and then her money is a very great recommendation to them, for it is certainly sadly wanted. She has so much tact and perception that I don't doubt she will win their hearts entirely at last."

"What did they say—did they say anything about me?" said Geraldine, hesitating very much.

"Why, of course they did," replied Lord Lindon gravely, "and of course you can't expect that they spoke otherwise than bitterly of you, for it is useless to deny that your marriage was the greatest possible disappointment to them. My father is the

most moderate in expression, but I think he feels it more deeply and less violently than my mother. Still, though everything looks unfavourable now, I think that with patience and perseverance you needn't despair of bringing them round, and you may be sure that I and Leonie will do all in our power to help you."

"Did they wish Leonie not to see me?" said Geraldine.

Lord Lindon hesitated, and then said, "Having been candid so far, I may as well tell you the whole truth, and then you will know what you have to go upon. Leonie has had a hard fight about it, for my mother wished her to promise not to visit you, and, I must say, took rather an authoritative and exasperating tone with her about it. I was afraid of a row, for she has not been accustomed to that sort of thing, and generally speaks her mind pretty plainly; however, she behaved with more discretion than I had dared to hope for, and said that she must decline making such a promise; that she believed I had no intention of quarrelling with you, and she should certainly

not advise me to do so. After this no more was said about it, for I think my mother saw from Leonie's manner that it was of very little use to dictate to her."

"I half hoped," said Geraldine, "that after Lord Silverton was fairly married, they would not have continued implacable. Have you seen his wife?"

"I saw her yesterday in her carriage. They say he ill-treats her, and she looks very unhappy. I should never have known her for the same girl I used to dance with every night."

"I am sure he does, and though I never liked Margaret St Aubyn, I am most heartily sorry for her fate, for really her home was so unhappy, it was a mere choice of evils."

Geraldine did not add, "I am glad I am not in her place;" for indeed she was even now thinking whether, if she had married Lord Silverton, her lot would not have been happier than at present. He ill-treated his wife, but so would Mr Lawrance if she allowed him, and surely the same power that she had over the one, she might have obtained over the other. She had already lost her faith in love,

and had come to think of marriage either as an affair of mutual convenience, and therefore agreement, or a mere question of who should prove strongest. Not often, however, did she suffer her mind to dwell on the subject, dimly conscious that she thought nothing that was right, and yet unable to see where she was wrong.

"And must you go now?" she said, as her brother took up his hat. "Well, it will not be long before you see me; I am so rich that I will afford the luxury of a workwoman to help me with my things; therefore I shall probably come the day after to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXI.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament.
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight, too, her dusky hair,
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time, and the cheerful dawn.

* * * * *

And now I see with eyes serene
The very pulse of the machine,
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, to command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

ACCORDINGLY, on the day mentioned, Geraldine, in great trepidation, set out for her brother's

house. It was a dry, biting cold day, but she was warmly dressed, and rather enjoyed the fresh air than otherwise. Lord Lindon had taken a good house in a fashionable part of London, and when Geraldine entered it, even she was astonished at the prodigality and luxury of everything about it. Several packing-cases stood in the hall, opened and unopened, as if furniture and other things were continually arriving. There was no one in the drawing-room when she was shown in, and she had time to look round, and feast her eyes, long unused to such sights, on the rare and expensive works of art and *virtù* scattered around. The room was in the greatest disorder and confusion, though here and there were attempts at arrangement; but every separate article, from the furniture upwards, showed a taste of the highest and most refined order. Geraldine herself had little technical knowledge of such matters, her mother's liking for them being principally assumed, as necessary to her position in society. The picture, statue, or piece of porcelain once bought, Lady Bournemouth cared not to talk about it, scarce-

ly look at it again, and would have been entirely unable to answer the flood of questions her daughter would have willingly poured forth concerning the different objects of art with which Lord Bournemouth's house abounded. But Geraldine had a genuine and natural craving for the beautiful, and an inborn refinement of taste, that supplied, in a great measure, the place of education. It was with real delight that she now wandered about the large drawing-room, almost forgetting the new sister-in-law she was so anxious to see, in pleasure at the beautiful sculptures, paintings, cameos, china, etc., which lay all around her.

She was arrested by the sound of a door opening, and turning round, saw advancing with outstretched hands, simply the most beautiful woman she had ever beheld.

Leonie Lindon was tall, and on a somewhat large scale. She was very dark, and very lovely; perfect features, and perfect colouring, with the head of a queen, and a proud, pure face, that seemed the perfect mirror of her stedfast heart. In this woman, who stood there, a very empress of women, and incarna-

tion of all noble womanly virtues, there seemed to be assembled all beauties and graces of body and soul, that could delight the eye and satisfy the mind. Faults she might have, but of the larger and nobler sort; no petty jealousy or envy, no trifling vanity or meanness, ever sullied her true, generous spirit. There was about her a proud, free consciousness that she was beautiful and admirable, that was even admirable in itself, and as far removed from vanity as the sunlight is from moonlight. Her face was pale, resolute, high-bred; the broad powerful brow indicating intellect as much as the short curling lip hinted that she might be roused to wrath too suddenly. Her eyes, which looked out, grave, glorious, and fearless, might perchance, on due occasion, sparkle, or even flash, in a way not pleasant to behold. Her dark masses of hair were drawn off a pair of small, well-shaped ears, and fastened in a large careless knot behind, thus displaying the beautiful contour of her head and neck. A perfect figure, with but this one fault, her feet and hands, though well shaped, were large, attesting the strain of Saxon blood,

and in that, perhaps, scarcely a blemish. But we have done; we fear to weary the reader, though we were fain to dwell awhile on this type of perfect womanhood.

She advanced to Geraldine with outstretched hands, as we have said, with a kind smile, and a kind frank greeting. Her voice was low, and very peculiar, with a musical tone in it, a tone that was reässuring withal, and that spoke straight from the heart to the heart. Geraldine was beautiful; had been, rather; she looked wan and faded by the side of this stranger, whose wonderful and peerless loveliness seemed to extinguish all other that was not as infinitely glorious as her own; and where could you find such? She was alone in the world; a paragon of beauty. But we shall appear extravagant; only, when we write of her, our pen naturally praises, and cannot praise enough; let it therefore be still, at least in description.

The two sisters sat down; Geraldine tried to speak, and to find something common-place and appropriate to say; but her tongue and her courage failed her; she remained silent.

She had no small change available at the moment; her companion had plenty of all kinds; gold, silver, and, even if need should be, of copper. Lady Lindon talked much and well; glancing at her sister-in-law out of her all-seeing eyes, and taking a mental inventory of her, correct enough as far as it went. After a time they were perfectly at ease with one another; Geraldine was fascinated by Lady Lindon, and Lady Lindon had seen so much of the world that she could easily adapt herself to her company.

"I wish she would be intimate!" thought Leonie. "I could be intimate with her at once; but it would never do! *Qu'elles sont drôles, ces Anglaises!* I am sure you are wondering where your brother is," she remarked aloud, for, as Lord Lindon had said, she was an excellent linguist, and spoke English well, though sometimes apt, when emphatic or excited, to mix French with it, that language being more her own natural tongue than any other. "He did mean to be here, but Milor—your father, I mean—sent for him about some papers—business—*que sais-je! Enfin,*

he is gone, but probably he will be back soon."

While Leonie was apparently entirely occupied in talking and listening, her thoughts were very busy, and the subject of her thoughts was Geraldine's husband. Lord Lindon had given her all the particulars of the runaway marriage, and she was now considering how far it might be a safe subject to introduce.

"You must present your husband to me," she said suddenly, with startling abruptness.

Geraldine coloured, hesitated, and then said, "I shall be delighted: he is very much occupied, and seldom pays visits; but here, of course, it is different."

The blush and the hesitation were not lost on Leonie, and she said no more about it. Lord Lindon now came in, in high spirits, for he had had a long conversation with his father about Geraldine, and Lord Bournemouth had seemed better disposed for a reconciliation, a result which would be exceedingly agreeable to his son's kind heart. Already pleased, he was still more so to find his wife and sister such good friends, and the rest of the day passed

off pleasantly enough. Leonie was gratified at discovering, at the end of it, that under her husband's auspices she had made more progress towards intimacy with Geraldine than could possibly have been expected in the time.

"I like your sister," she said reflectively, after Geraldine had left. "She is true-hearted, and clever, and beautiful, I think. What made her run away? Lord and Lady Bournemouth must have been fond of her; her home must have been happy?"

"Oh, don't talk of it!" exclaimed Lord Lindon. "They wanted to marry her—to establish her in life, as the cursed phrase is. They would have married her to Silverton, of all idiots in the world, and so—"

"And so she ran away. Mr Lawrance is then very charming, very agreeable?"

"If you could see the man!" said Lord Lindon, comically shrugging his shoulders. "But who wouldn't be better than Silverton?"

"Eh! you go too fast," said Lady Lindon, smiling. "Lord Silverton is not very clever, not very amiable perhaps; but he is rich, he is an Earl; *enfin*, it is a good match. And Mr

Lawrance, he also is not amiable and clever perhaps, also is he poor, and of no birth; so, to use one of your expressions, 'she gets no change out of it.'"

"But she loves him; and girls think a deal of that."

"But she does not," said Lady Lindon, quietly and decidedly. "I spoke to her of him; she coloured and hesitated, as no woman does who loves her husband."

"I'm afraid that's too true," said Lord Lindon unwillingly, as he remembered his sister's manner when he first saw her. "It is a sad case."

"And she so young!" continued Leonie. "She is very poor, is she not?"

"As far as I could see, they are horribly, miserably poor, and you see how ill, and pinched, and starved she looks. You called her beautiful just now, but I tell you, Leonie, that you can't form the slightest idea of what she was three years ago, from what she is now. Such a lovely girl she was! So bright and full of life and spirits! I never saw any one like her."

"Had she no other admirers, no offers?" inquired Lady Lindon. "They tell me she was the greatest beauty in London."

"Admirers by the score, but not offers, I believe. You see Geraldine never liked lovers, and nonsense of that sort, and didn't give the men a chance. She had the reputation of being rather snubby, and that sort of thing, and people thought it was no use to propose."

"We were talking of her poverty," said Lady Lindon presently. "I wish something could be done for her! In these cases it is wonderful how much smoother the wheels run for a little oil."

"My dear child, so do I; for what they'll do when their family increases, goodness only knows. But my father has no living vacant, or likely to be so, and if he had, he wouldn't give it to them."

"One can buy livings in England?" said Leonie interrogatively.

"One can;—are you thinking of buying one?"

"I am; should you mind it?"

"I don't say I mind your thinking over

the plan," said Lord Lindon, after a few moments' pause, "because, as all my money come from you, I should wish to spend it to please you. But it is a thing that requires thinking and talking over, before we settle anything. Your fortune, though large, won't last for ever; we shall be very little better off when my father dies; we may have a family of our own to provide for; and it takes a good bit of money to buy a living worth giving."

"All that is very true," said Leonie sighing; "but we must think it over, and think what we can do for them. It seems such a shame for us to have so much, while your sister has not enough to live on!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Want is the only woe God gives us power to heal.
— Mrs Norton.

'Tis a stern and a startling thing to think
How often mortality stands on the brink
Of its grave without any misgiving:
And yet in this slippery world of strife,
In the stir of human bustle so rife,
There are daily sounds to tell us that Life
Is dying, and Death is living.—Hood.

Unknown to Leonie and to Geraldine, there was another person who was interesting himself about the latter's fate, and that was Lord Fitzgermaine, her former acquaintance and

admirer. He had often thought of her since her flight, wondered how she was getting on with that fellow, and what she found to like in him, and generally ended his meditations with, "She was an uncommonly nice girl, and I shouldn't have minded marrying her myself."

He had been going over this old ground in his mind one morning at breakfast, and had arrived at this point, when his father suddenly interrupted him by observing, as he opened his letters, "So old Haughton's dead at last."

Lord Fitzgermaine looked up interested. "Dead, is he? And what did he die of?"

"Caught a fever in one of the cottages," said the Duke. "Well, I'm sorry he's gone. He was a fine old fellow, and used to be a rare good companion in our college days. Now comes the business of filling up the living."

"You promised to give Mr Lawrance the next vacant one," observed his son.

"Lawrance—Lawrance—what, the fellow who ran away with little Geraldine Vivian? I

can't give it to him—what are you thinking of, Fitz?"

"Why not? you promised it."

"I promised him a living; but who ever expected Dorchester to be the next one vacant?" replied the Duke. "Why, it's worth a thousand a year, and being my best living, and our own place, and all, I meant to keep it in the family. Your cousin Frederick would be thankful for it, and, I dare say, expects it."

"Fred is a good fellow," returned Lord Fitzgermaine, "but he would be a horrid bore set down at our doors. He is Oxford mad, and would establish Maypoles, and Daily Service, and Heaven knows what all. The thing would be a nuisance."

"That's true," said the Duke. "He would do better at Wroughton, and perhaps that may be vacant in a year or two. But as to this Lawrance,—it's out of the question. Just think what a scandal their marriage made! We shall have a leader in the 'Times' about us, if I give him the living."

"No fear of that," said Lord Fitzgermaine. "The thing has blown over—nobody thinks

of it now. And he saved my life, and a promise is a promise. They are miserably poor, I'm told, and Lindon would take it as a great kindness."

"Serves them right," said the Duke. "But if it would oblige Lindon, that's another thing. I wonder, if I gave the living to his brother-in-law, or rather to his sister, whether he would get his father to sell me that piece of land which joins our park. How they come to have it there, away from all the rest, I can't conceive. Old Bournemouth always put me off when I mentioned it, but Lindon can do anything with him, and it would be a great convenience."

"I dare say he would," said Lord Fitzgermaine. "He has not quarrelled with Lady Geraldine. Ernest tells me that they are often at one another's houses, and that he is always trying to patch up the business with the old lord. So of course he will be thankful to have them put in a better position."

"Well, will you sound him, Fitz, and see what he says about it? If he can get the ground for me, well and good; the Lawrances

shall have the living. What is the fellow like? decently presentable?"

"The fellow is a snob; but so are a good many fellows, and I don't know that he is worse than the common run of parsons. And it will be far pleasanter to have Lady Geraldine about the place than old Mrs Haughton in her poke bonnet."

"Mrs Haughton was a good old soul, and took excellent care of the people; I hope Lady Geraldine may do as much. But you will have your way; and, as you say, a promise is a promise. Why you ever went in an outrigger when you can't swim, Heaven only knows."

With which not unnatural reflection the Duke pushed away his cup, gathered up his papers, and left the room.

Lord Fitzgermaine meanwhile began to arrange matters about the living. He saw Lord Lindon, and mentioned his father's proposal; and Lord Lindon, though sufficiently disgusted that the Duke should try to make a bargain of what was Mr Lawrance's right, still thought the offer too good to be neglected.

He spoke to his father, who proved singularly impracticable on the subject, at first refusing to do anything which would help the Lawrances; and when his son's representations of Geraldine's extreme want had overcome his reluctance—for he still loved her, as much, ay, perhaps more, than ever—it appeared that it was not in his power to sell the land. There was a heavy mortgage on it, which he had no means of paying off, ready money being a commodity peculiarly scarce in the noble house of Vivian, and one not to be had for the asking. This difficulty, however, was soon settled by Leonie, who advanced the sum required, overjoyed at finding a way to benefit her sister-in-law.

"Geraldine, it is all settled; you are to have the living," she said, as Geraldine entered her drawing-room one morning.

It was cold and raw, and raining heavily; the sort of day that absolutely shrivelled Leonie up, and deprived her of all her wonted energy. She was curled up in an arm-chair by the fire, dressed in a velvet gown, a loose seal-skin jacket, and over all a splendid India

shawl; yet she looked pale and pinched, and shrugged her shoulders up to her ears with cold.

"Here, come to the fire; how you can stir out such a wretched day as this, and on foot too—and in such a thin gown and cloak."

Geraldine's only answer was to throw herself into a chair, and burst into tears.

"Hey day!" cried Lady Lindon. "What's the matter now? I thought you would be pleased, and behold! I see a very Niobe before me."

"Pleased, Leonie!" said Geraldine through her sobs, "I am more; I am thankful—grateful, oh, more than I can say! If you knew what this is to me! If you knew the wearing, crushing load of anxiety it takes off; the canker that has been eating my very heart out!"

"My poor little sister," said Lady Lindon gently, "how you have suffered! But come, I expect Lindon; don't let him find us so doleful; remember it is over now, Geraldine; never to return, I trust."

"I don't know—I don't believe that I shall ever be happy and at rest again. This misery

gone, another will come. There is no peace for me."

"None, if you think so. This is both foolish and wrong, Geraldine. Where is the courage I used to admire so much?"

Geraldine endeavoured to rouse herself. Again and again she expressed her gratitude, tried to shake off her depression, and look on the bright side of her brightening prospects, but it was in vain; all kinds of gloomy forebodings had taken possession of her, and insensibly communicated themselves to Leonie, who needed nothing to make her spirits lower than they were already inclined to be.

"You are insupportable!" cried she at length, half vexed. "I looked to visitors to make me cheerful this morning, and the first who comes is more doleful than myself. Come, talk of something gayer—your new house, if you like. And first, one word more on that subject. I hear the furniture is bad and scanty; you must let me help you to buy some more."

And she placed a bank bill for the amount of five hundred pounds in her sister's hands.

Geraldine's eyes glistened. "Leonie, this is too much; I can't accept so much."

"Nonsense, you can, and you must. It is your duty to your husband and to me. Really, Geraldine, you don't know how thankful I am when I see a little money going the right road. I am ashamed of myself when I look round, and see so much lavished on luxuries and toys, and know how it is needed elsewhere. Even my own dress costs far more than it ought to do."

"And talking of that," said Geraldine, who did not like to hear the conversation take this turn, "why do you wear that velvet gown and seal-skin jacket? They don't look well together."

"*Ma foi!*" said Leonie, "I am cold, *ma chère. Cela ne va pas mal.*"

"Yes, it does; you don't look well in them. And where are your ear-rings? You have none on."

"Vanity of vanities!" said Leonie, laughing; "when I am in the right way for economy and simplicity, you come and tempt me to extravagance and finery. *Allons*—if it pleases

you, I will wear a silk dress and ear-rings; but always have such a smile on your face as you have now, and I shall never be cold again, I think. By the by, Lindon told me that your mother has been ill lately; have you heard anything about it?"

"I? No; how should I?" said Geraldine.

"I thought he might have said something to you about it; you saw him this morning?"

"I did, but only for ten minutes. Surely, if there had been anything seriously wrong, he would have mentioned it? Mamma was always well, though not strong."

"I should think he would; we should have heard of it somehow."

There was something very seriously wrong however; Lady Bournemouth was dying. She had taken a severe cold, had insisted, while it was at its height, on going to a ball given by one of her fashionable friends; inflammation of the lungs had set in, and now her hours on earth were numbered. The most celebrated physicians of the day had been called in, but they could only say, as they stood round the bed in the darkened room, that their skill was

in vain, Lady Bournemouth had not twenty-four hours to live. She knew her danger; if the doctors had not thought it right to tell her, her husband's silent misery, as he sat beside her, would have indicated with sufficient clearness the real state of the case. It was an awful, almost a ghastly death-bed. She had no hope for the future; death at the least and mildest was the abandonment of all that she loved, all that she valued, and her abject terror, her attempts to hide the truth from herself, were fearful things to see. But whatever she might say, she could not but feel that her end was approaching, and showed it by her restless eagerness to gather all her kindred around her; as though she would fain cheat death of his prey, by surrounding it with a rampart of loving hearts that he could not scale. Already Lord and Lady Lindon, and Sir William Ellison, were there beside the sorrowing husband, but even then she did not seem satisfied; one dear face was missing, one space was vacant.

"Geraldine!" she murmured, in faltering accents.

Lord Lindon left the room. He took a cab and drove to the Lawrances; the house was shut up, Geraldine in bed and asleep. After some delay the door was opened; he ran straight up-stairs to her room, awoke her, explained the case as calmly and clearly as he could. Great and astonishing as the shock was, she did not seem confused; she was dressed and ready in ten minutes, and even when, with her hand in her brother's, she crossed again the threshold she had left in such an ill-fated moment, her step did not falter, and her eye was bright and steady. As she entered her father looked up, and visibly started, almost shuddered; for the pinched and faded features of his dying wife did not bear a fainter resemblance to herself strong and well, than did those of Geraldine Lawrance to those of Geraldine Vivian. She approached the bed, but for some moments Lady Bournemouth did not seem conscious of her presence. Time was flying fast; life was rapidly ebbing. At a look from Sir William, Lord Lindon moved forwards.

"Mother," he said, "Geraldine is here."

"Geraldine—where is she? That is not she," said Lady Bournemouth, as her son slightly indicated his sister. "That is not she," she continued quickly, and as if her mind wandered. "Geraldine—my Geraldine—was bright and rosy and young; she is old and pale and careworn. Ah, no—that is not the Geraldine I lost."

For the first time Geraldine's calmness forsook her. With a wild strangled cry she sprang forward, and fell on her knees by the bed.

"Oh, mother, it is indeed the Geraldine you lost! Speak to me, and say you forgive me."

A smile crossed the dying woman's face. "Ah, I see—I see; it is indeed my Geraldine. Child, I have nothing to forgive you. I should ask your pardon; I drove you to it. I am glad you did not marry him. Are you happy now, my dearest?"

Lord Bournemouth had been intently watching the two, and as she said this, an expression of lively pain crossed his features, for in his daughter's face he could easily read the truth. He made a quick eager movement, as though

he would speak and save her the embarrassment of answering, which attracted his wife's attention.

"Frederick," she said,—"don't move," she continued, with the habitual thoughtfulness of twenty-three years, as he tried to rise from his chair, "I can speak loud enough. Frederick, when I am gone—for I suppose I am going—I shall leave you Geraldine to take care of you. Yes—I have robbed you of her for long, I would not let you forgive her; but now I restore her to you. Take her, she is my last gift."

Lady Bournemouth stopped, exhausted. There was silence for some minutes, then she signed to Leonie to approach. "Nearer," she said; "put your head down, my voice is going."

Leonie knelt down, and put her ear to her mother-in-law's mouth.

"Lindon is kind and true," she whispered, "but he is indolent. You will see that he takes care of his father and sister; above all, that they are not separated again? You will not let him neglect them, you will care for them?"

"I will. I promise it," said Leonie.

"I thank you, my daughter, for you are indeed my daughter. You came to be a comfort and a blessing to them, Leonie."

These were the last words she spoke. Several hours she lingered after this, but speechless and senseless, her gasping breath alone showing that life remained. Gradually it became fainter and fainter; and before the cold grey dawn broke, Lady Bournemouth's spirit had passed away.

Geraldine returned to her house; oh, how she longed to stay amongst her own people, had not duty imperatively recalled her to her husband! Sir William Ellison also left; no one remained but Lord and Lady Lindon, who sat together in the adjoining room conversing in low tones. Leonie still wore the evening gown she had on when suddenly summoned from a dinner party the night before; she was wrapped in a large shawl, and shivering extremely. Her face looked sallow, contrasted with the bright pink of her pretty gay dress, and her whole air was worn and wearied.

"You are tired, Leonie," said her husband, "you had better go to bed."

"I could not sleep," she replied; "see, the sun is already rising, but I will lie down presently. I am only tired in body—my spirit is glad."

"Is it? Then mine is not. Leonie, it disturbs me; my mother was not what you call a religious woman."

"Ah, hush, Lindon," said Leonie. "I dare not think of it. God is good—but He is also just, and I fear—fear more than I dare hope. My spirit is glad that she forgave your sister; at least she died with words of love, and not hate, on her lips. It is the one small piece of comfort."

Lord Lindon was silent, deeply reflective apparently; then he said, "This will make a change for us."

"How so?" inquired his wife.

"I suppose we shall live with my father."

"I suppose so."

"Then you don't mind it? I was afraid you would; I was afraid you might find it too great a tie."

"*Mais, mon ami,*" said Leonie, "if he wishes it, it is our duty. We are not here in the world to think of what best pleases ourselves. There is work for us to do."

"And little enough I, for one, have done of it. But you—you are always sacrificing yourself."

"And if I were, better so than living to please myself. Even during the worst part of my life—my first marriage—there was a satisfaction in the thought that I had done it to please my father, not myself."

"Leonie, it is so strange to hear you, not yet twenty, talk of having had a husband before me."

"*Ah, oui,* I have lived much, if not long," she said. "But it was better for me; it suited me. I should have died of the life your English misses lead. I cannot satisfy my soul and mind with visiting poor people, and looking after a garden. I must do and see, as well as think. Probably I should have left my home, become actress, singer,—*que sais-je?*"

"Truly you would have been rather a wild bird in the nest."

"Your English women," she continued, "become stupid, *fâde;* they live in the country, and talk and think country gossip. If married, to that they add baby and governess gossip. If they are clever, if they have a thinking brain and an active spirit, ah, how often, finding no field open, does it not turn upon itself, feeding on itself. Then they become invalids. From being '*malades imaginaires*," they become *malades* in earnest; that is often the end of your country-house existence. But they tell me it is good and necessary, this system of living, each proprietor on his own land; it is one of the strong points of England. I believe it—but the women suffer cruelly."

As was often the case, Leonie was soliloquizing; Lord Lindon could neither understand not sympathize with her; therefore he waited in silence till she had finished, and then resumed his say.

"You will be dull, Leonie; it is not the life you are accustomed to lead."

"*Ah, tais-toi, mon cher Lindon,*" said she. "I repeat, it is our duty. I am not a child, who always wants new toys; if I thought it

was right, I could live anywhere, or do anything. How does Geraldine resign herself to live so differently from what she used? If she is strong, so am I. *J'ai de la force, moi aussi.*"

"I know my father will wish it," said Lord Lindon, thoughtfully; "and, as you say, it is our duty. For myself, I shall like it; it is only for you I could wish it different."

"Put me out of your head, I shall do very well," said Leonie. "But I am tired, very tired; I will lie down on a sofa. The housekeeper has prepared a room. But first—I will look in here again."

She moved towards the room where the corpse lay. Lord Lindon got up, took her hand, and went in with her. The body was already laid out, the eyes were closed, the hair bound up. She looked calm, young, beautiful.

"It is extraordinary," said Lord Lindon in a low whisper, "that she should be taken and my father left. She was twenty years younger than he; she was only forty-five. And he so broken and infirm!"

"She looks like a girl again," said Leonie; "she looks younger than Geraldine, and so like! The Lord have mercy on her! Ah, mother, you were good to me."

She stooped down, kissed the cold dead hand, then slowly left the room.

END OF VOL. I.

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